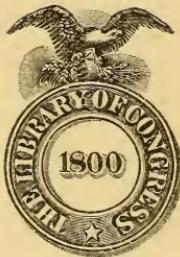


BEASTS·OF·THE·FIELD

WILLIAM·J·LONG





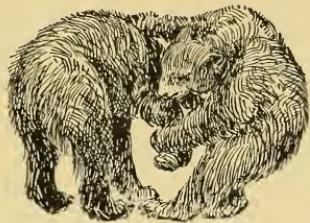
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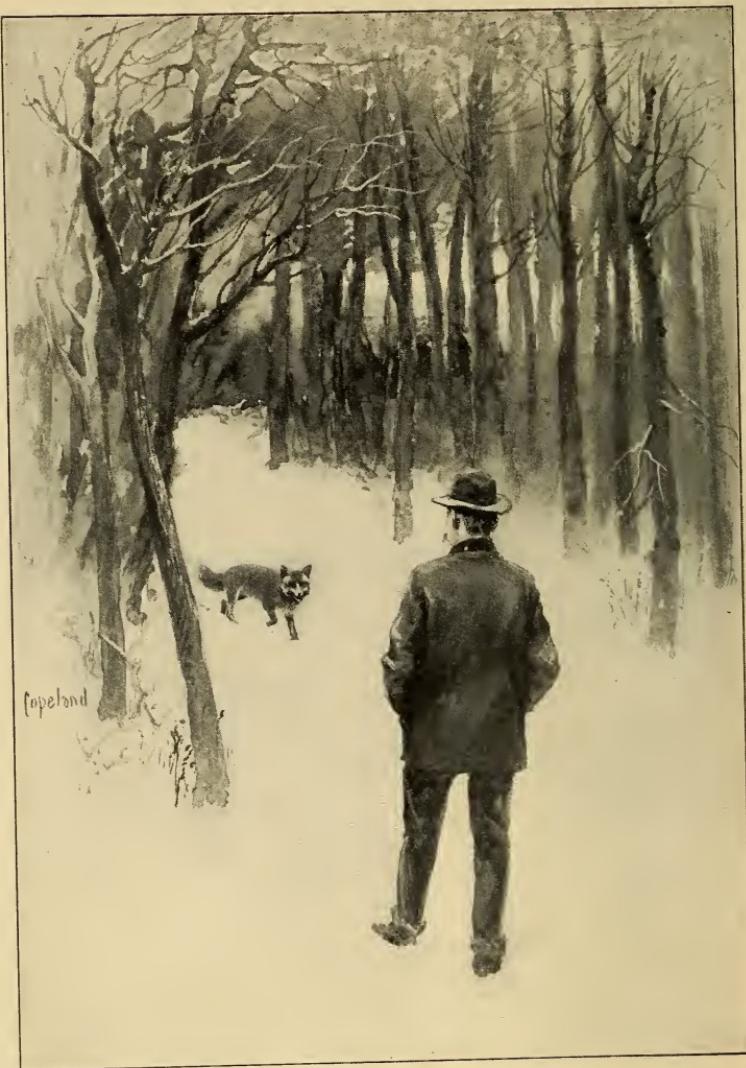
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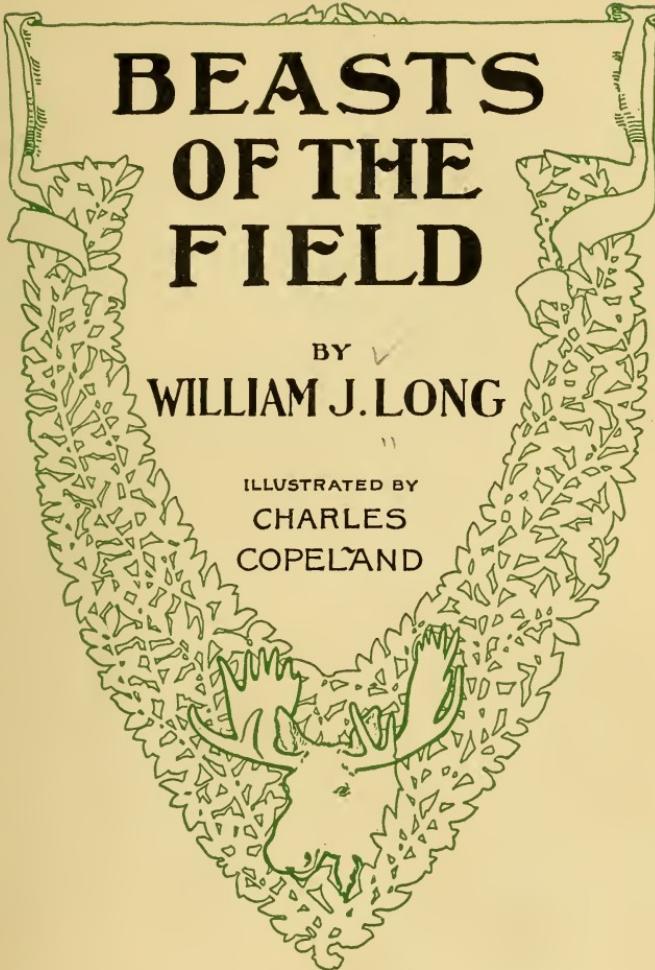
Beasts of the Field





Did you ever meet a fox face to face?

(See page 273)

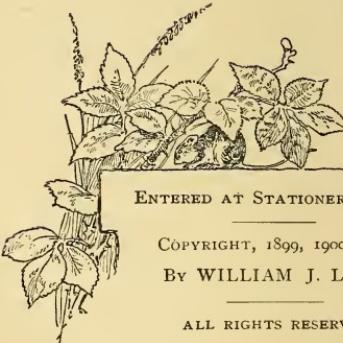
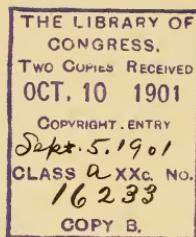


BEASTS OF THE FIELD

BY
WILLIAM J. LONG

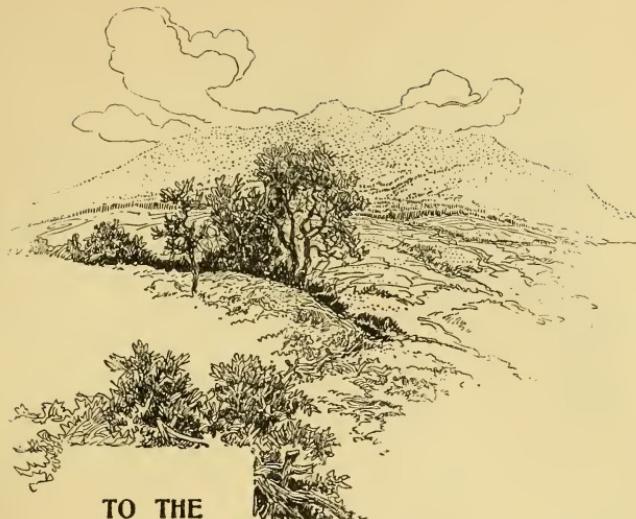
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**CHARLES
COPELAND**

BOSTON, U.S.A., AND LONDON
GINN & COMPANY PUBLISHERS
THE ATHENÆUM PRESS
1901



WILLIAM J. LONG
BOSTON, MASS.

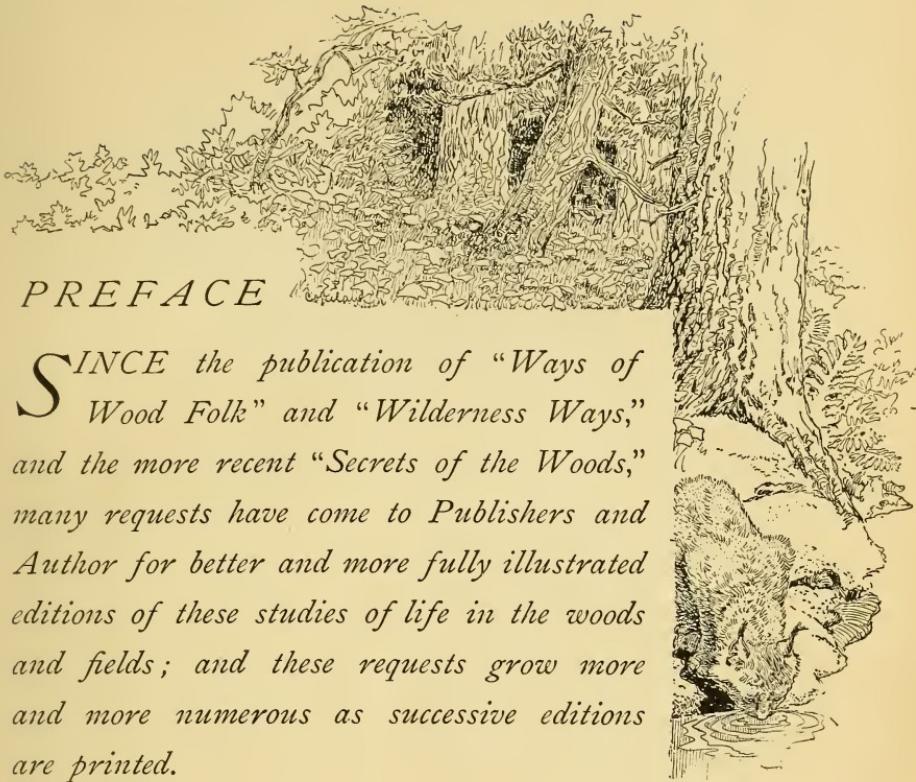
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TO THE
TEACHERS OF AMERICA

who are striving to make Nature Study more vital and attractive by revealing a vast realm of Nature outside the realm of Science, and a world of ideas above and beyond the world of facts, these studies from Nature are dedicated





PREFACE

SINCE the publication of "Ways of Wood Folk" and "Wilderness Ways," and the more recent "Secrets of the Woods," many requests have come to Publishers and Author for better and more fully illustrated editions of these studies of life in the woods and fields; and these requests grow more and more numerous as successive editions are printed.

It is chiefly in answer to this demand that these two volumes, "Beasts of the Field" and "Fowls of the Air," have been prepared. They include most of the previous sketches, with enough new material to give variety

and a wider range of acquaintance with
the Wood Folk.



The names used here for birds and beasts were given by the Milicete Indians; the occasional legends referred to have never been written, but were heard by the writer before the camp-fire, in the heart of the wilderness; and the incidents and sketches are true to life, as I have seen it in many years of watching and following the wild things.

WM. J. LONG.

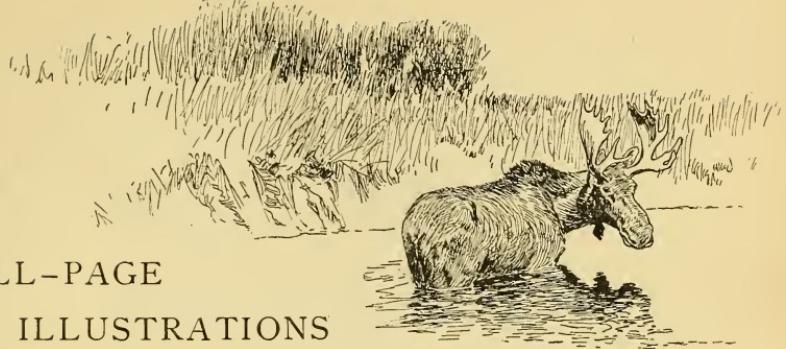
STAMFORD, CONN.,

August, 1901.



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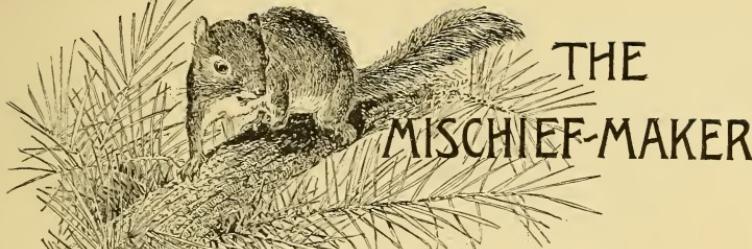
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MEEKO
THE
MISCHIEF-
MAKER--



MEEKO



THE MISCHIEF-MAKER

THERE is a curious Indian legend about Meeko the red squirrel—the Mischief-Maker, as the Milicetes call him—which is also an excellent commentary upon his character. Simmo told it to me one day when we had caught Meeko coming out of a woodpecker's hole with the last of a brood of fledgelings in his mouth, chuckling to himself over his hunting.

Long ago, in the days when Clote Scarpe ruled the animals, Meeko was much larger than he is now, large as Mooween the bear. But his temper was so fierce and his disposition so altogether bad that the wood folk were threatened with destruction. Meeko



*Meeko
The
Mischief-maker*

killed right and left with the temper of a weasel, who kills from pure lust of blood. So Clote Scarpe, to save the little woods-people, made Meeko smaller — small as he is now. Unfortunately, Clote Scarpe forgot Meeko's disposition, which remained as big and as bad as before. So now Meeko goes about the woods with a small body and a great temper, barking, scolding, quarreling and, since he cannot destroy in his rage as before, setting other animals by the ears to destroy each other.

When you have listened to Meeko's scolding for a season, and have seen him going from nest to nest after innocent fledgelings; or creeping into the den of his big cousin, the beautiful gray squirrel, to kill the young; or driving away his little cousin, the chipmunk, to steal his hoarded nuts; or watching every fight that goes on in the woods, jeering and chuckling above it,— then you begin to understand the Indian legend.

Spite of his doubtful ways, however, he is interesting and always unexpected. When you have watched the red squirrel that lives

near your camp all summer, feeding from your hand and sharing your life until you think you know all about him, he does the queerest thing, good or bad, to upset all your theories and cast the shadow of doubt upon the Indian legends about him.

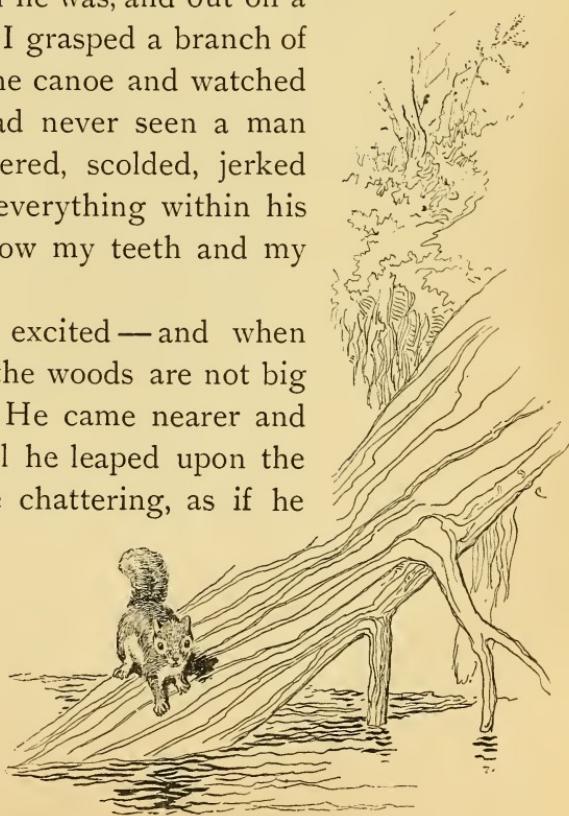
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*Meeko
the
Mischief-maker*



I remember one squirrel that greeted me, the first living thing in the great woods, as I ran my canoe ashore on a wilderness river. Meeko heard me coming. His bark sounded loudly in a big spruce above the dip of the paddles. As we turned shoreward, he ran down the tree in which he was, and out on a fallen log to meet us. I grasped a branch of the old log to steady the canoe and watched him curiously. He had never seen a man before; he barked, jeered, scolded, jerked his tail, whistled, did everything within his power to make me show my teeth and my disposition.

Suddenly he grew excited—and when Meeko grows excited the woods are not big enough to hold him. He came nearer and nearer to my canoe, till he leaped upon the gunwale and sat there chattering, as if he





were Adjidaumo come back again and I were Hiawatha. All the while he had poured out a torrent of squirrel talk, but now his note changed; jeering and scolding and curiosity went out of it; something else crept in. I began to feel, somehow, that he was trying to make me understand something, and found me very stupid about it.

I began to talk quietly, calling him a rattle-head and a disturber of the peace. At the first sound of my voice he listened with intense curiosity, then leaped to the log, ran the length of it, jumped down and began to dig furiously among the moss and dead leaves. Every moment or two he would stop, and jump to the log to see if I were watching him.

Presently he ran to my canoe, sprang upon the gunwale, jumped back again, and ran along the log as before to where he had been digging. He did it again, looking back at me and saying plainly: "Come here, come and look." I stepped out of the canoe to the old log, whereupon Meeko went off into a fit of terrible excitement.—I was

bigger than he expected; I had only two legs; *kut-e-k'chuck, kut-e-k'chuck!* *whit, whit, whit, kut-e-k'chuck!*

7

*Meeko
the
Mischief-maker*

I stood where I was until he got over his excitement. Then he came towards me, and led me along the log, with much chuckling and jabbering, to the hole in the leaves where he had been digging. When I bent over it he sprang to a spruce trunk, on a level with my head, fairly bursting with excitement, but watching me with intensest interest. In the hole I found a small lizard, one of the rare kind that lives under logs and loves the dusk. He had been bitten through the back and disabled. He could still use legs, tail, and head feebly, but could not run away. When I picked him up and held him in my hand, Meeko came closer with loud-voiced curiosity, longing to leap to my hand and claim his own, but held back by fear.—“What is it? He's mine; I found him. What is it?” he barked, jumping about as if bewitched. Two curiosities, the lizard and the man, were almost too much for him. I never saw a squirrel more excited.



*Meeko
The
Mischief-maker*

He had evidently found the lizard by accident, bit him to keep him still, and then, astonished by the rare find, hid him away where he could dig him out and watch him at leisure.

I put the lizard back into the hole and covered him with leaves; then went to unloading my canoe. Meeko watched me closely. The moment I was gone he dug away the leaves, took his treasure out, watched it with wide bright eyes, bit it once more to keep it still, and covered it up again carefully. Then he came chuckling along to where I was putting up my tent.

In a week he owned the camp, coming and going at his own will, stealing my provisions when I forgot to feed him, and scolding me roundly at every irregular occurrence. He was an early riser and insisted on my conforming to the custom. Every morning at daylight, he would leap from a fir tip to my ridge-pole, and sit there, barking and whistling, until I put my head out of my door, or until Simmo came along with his axe.

*Meeko
the
Mischief-maker*



Of Simmo and his axe Meeko had a mortal dread, which I could not understand till one day when I paddled silently back to camp and, instead of coming up the path, sat idly in my canoe watching the Indian, who had broken his one pipe and now sat making another out of a chunk of black alder and a length of nanny bush. Simmo was as interesting to watch, in his way, as any of the wood folk.

Presently Meeko came down, chattering his curiosity at seeing the Indian so still and so occupied. A red squirrel is always unhappy unless he knows all about everything. He watched from the nearest tree for a while, but could not make up his mind what was going on. Then he came down to the ground and advanced a foot at a time, jumping up continually but coming down in the same spot, barking to make Simmo turn his head and show his hand. Simmo watched out of the corner of his eye until Meeko was near a solitary tree which stood in the middle of the camp ground, when he jumped up suddenly and rushed at the

squirrel, who sprang to the tree and ran to a branch out of reach, snickering and jeering.



*Meeko
The
Mischief-maker*

Simmo took his axe deliberately and swung it mightily at the foot of the tree, as if to chop it down; only he hit the trunk with the head, not the blade of his weapon. At the first blow, which made his toes tingle, Meeko stopped jeering and ran higher. Simmo swung again and Meeko went up another notch. So it went on, Simmo looking up intently to see the effect and Meeko running higher after each blow, until the tip-top was reached. Then Simmo gave a mighty whack; the squirrel leaped far out and came to the ground, sixty feet below; picked himself up, none the worse for his leap, and rushed scolding away to his nest. Then Simmo said *umpfh!* like a bear, and went back to his pipe-making. He had not smiled nor relaxed the intent expression of his face during the whole little comedy.

I found out afterwards that making Meeko jump from a tree-top is one of the few diversions of Indian children. I tried it myself

*Meeko
the
Mischief-maker*

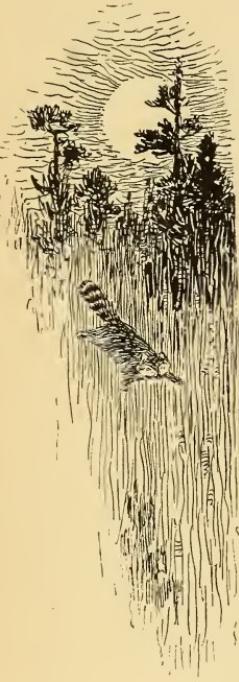


many times with many squirrels, and found to my astonishment that a jump from any height, however great, is no concern to a squirrel, red or gray. They have a way of flattening the whole body and tail against the air, which breaks their fall. Their bodies, and especially their bushy tails, have a curious tremulous motion, like the quiver of wings, as they come down. The flying squirrel's sailing down from a tree-top to another tree, fifty feet away, is but an exaggeration, due to the membrane connecting the fore and hind legs, of what all squirrels practice continually. I have seen a red squirrel land lightly after jumping from an enormous height, and run away as if nothing unusual had happened. But though I have watched them often, I have never seen a squirrel do this except when compelled to do so. When chased by a weasel or a marten, or when the axe beats against the trunk below—either because the vibration hurts their feet, or else they fear the tree is being cut down—they use the strange gift to save their lives. But I fancy it is a breathless

experience, and they never try it for fun; though I have seen them do all sorts of risky stumps in leaping from branch to branch.



*Meeko
The
Mischief-maker*



It would be interesting to know whether the raccoon also, a large, heavy animal, has the same way of breaking his fall when he jumps from a height. One bright moonlight night, when I ran ahead of the dogs, I saw a big coon leap from a tree to the ground, a distance of some thirty or forty feet. The dogs had treed him in an evergreen, and he left them howling below while he stole silently from branch to branch until a good distance away, when, to save time, he leaped to the ground. He struck with a heavy thump, but ran on uninjured as swiftly as before, and gave the dogs a long run before they treed him again.

The sole of a coon's foot is so padded with fat and gristle that it touches the ground like a coiled spring. This helps him greatly in his dizzy jumps; but I suspect that he also knows the squirrel trick of flattening his body and tail against the air so as to fall lightly.

The chipmunk seems to be the only one of the squirrel family in whom this gift is wanting. Possibly he has it also, if the need ever comes. I fancy, however, that he would fare badly if compelled to jump from a spruce top, for his body is heavy and his tail small from long living on the ground; all of which seems to indicate that the tree-squirrel's bushy tail is given him, not for ornament, but to aid his passage from branch to branch, and to break his fall when he comes down from a height.

By way of contrast with Meeko, you may try a curious trick on the chipmunk. It is not easy to get him into a tree; he prefers a log or an old wall when frightened; and he is seldom more than two or three jumps from his den. But watch him as he goes from his garner to the grove where the acorns are, or to the field where his winter corn is ripening. Put yourself near his path (he always follows the same one to and fro) where there is no refuge close at hand. Then, as he comes along, rush at him suddenly and he will take to the nearest tree in



Meeko
*The
Mischief-maker*

his alarm. When he recovers from his fright—which is soon over; for he is the most trustful of squirrels and looks down at you with interest, never questioning your motives—take a stick and begin to tap the tree softly. The more slow and rhythmical your tattoo the sooner he is charmed. Presently he comes down closer and closer, his eyes filled with strange wonder. More than once I have had a chipmunk come to my hand and rest upon it, looking everywhere for the queer sound that brought him down, forgetting fright and cornfield and coming winter in his bright curiosity.



Meeko is a bird of another color. He never trusts you nor anybody else fully, and his curiosity is generally of the vulgar, selfish kind. When the autumn woods are busy places, and wings flutter and little feet go patterning everywhere after winter supplies,

he also begins garnering, remembering the hungry days of last winter. But he is always more curious to see what others are doing than to fill his own bins. He seldom trusts to one storehouse — he is too suspicious for that — but hides his things in twenty different places; some shagbarks in the old wall, a handful of acorns in a hollow tree, an ear of corn under the eaves of the old barn, a pint of chestnuts scattered about in the trees, some in crevices in the bark, some in a pine crotch covered carefully with needles, and one or two stuck firmly into the splinters of every broken branch that is not too conspicuous. But he never gathers much at a time. The moment he sees anybody else gathering he forgets his own work and goes spying to see where others are hiding their store. The little chipmunk, who knows his thieving and his devices, always makes one turn, at least, in the tunnel to his den too small for Meeko to follow.

He sees a blue jay flitting through the woods, and knows by his unusual silence that he is hiding things. Meeko follows

after him, stopping all his jabber and stealing from tree to tree, watching, for hours if need be, until he knows that Deedeeaskh is gathering corn from a certain field. Then he watches the line of flight, like a bee hunter, and sees Deedeeaskh disappear twice by an oak on the wood's edge. Meeko rushes away at a headlong pace and hides himself in the oak. There he traces the jay's line of flight a little farther into the woods; sees the unconscious thief disappear by an old pine. Meeko hides in the pine, and so traces the jay straight to one of his storehouses.

Sometimes Meeko is so elated over the discovery that, with all the fields laden with food, he cannot wait for winter. When the jay goes away Meeko falls to eating or to carrying away his store. More often he marks the spot and goes away silently. When he is hungry he will carry off Deedeeaskh's corn before touching his own.

Once I saw the tables turned in a most interesting fashion. Deedeeaskh is as big a thief in his way as is Meeko, and also as vile a nest-robber. The red squirrel had found a

hoard of chestnuts—small fruit, but sweet and good—and was hiding it away. Part of it he stored in a hollow under the stub of a broken branch, twenty feet from the ground, so near the source of supply that no one would ever think of looking for it there. While he was gone back to his chestnut tree, and I watched for his return, a blue jay came stealing into the tree, spying and sneaking about as if a nest of fresh thrush's eggs were somewhere near. He smelled a mouse evidently, for after a moment's spying he hid himself away in the tree-top, close up against the trunk. Presently Meeko came back, with his face bulging as if he had toothache, uncovered his store, emptied in the half-dozen chestnuts from his cheek pockets and covered them all up again.

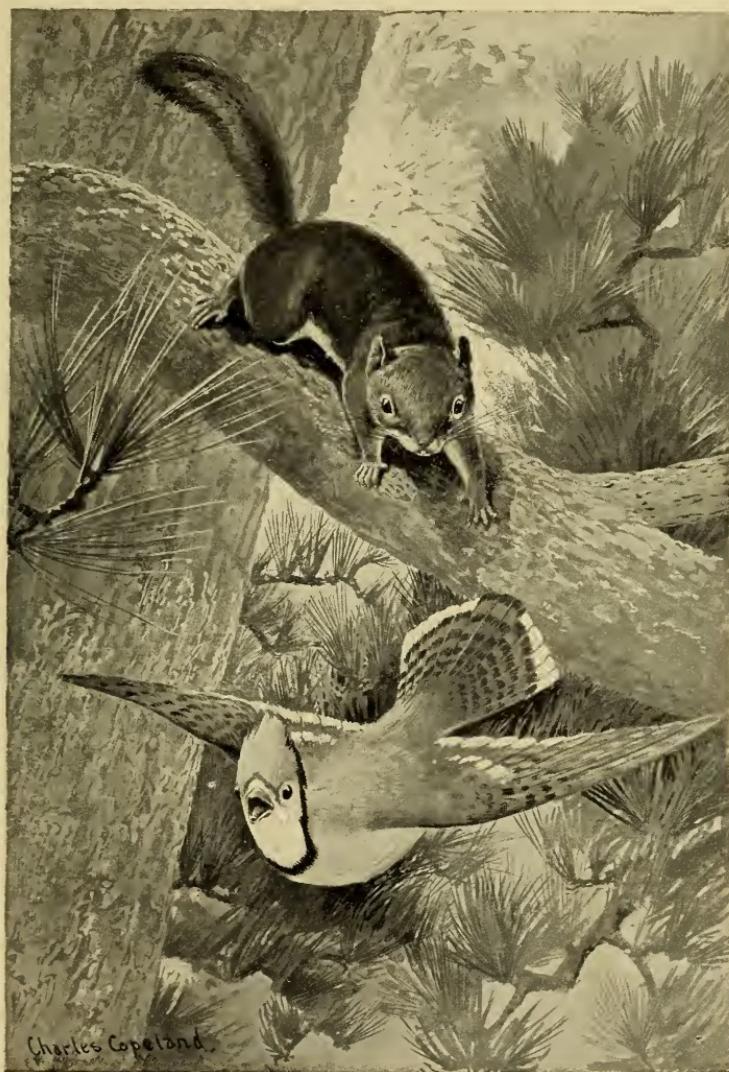
The moment he was gone the blue jay went straight to the spot, seized a mouthful of nuts, and flew swiftly away. He made three trips before the squirrel came back. Meeko in his hurry never noticed the loss, but emptied his pockets and was off to the chestnut tree again. When he returned, the





jay in his eagerness had disturbed the leaves which covered the hidden store. Meeko noticed it and was all suspicion in an instant. He whipped off the covering and stood staring down intently into the garner, evidently trying to compute the number he had brought and the number that were there. Then a terrible scolding began, a scolding that was broken short off when a distant screaming of jays came floating through the woods. Meeko covered his store hurriedly, ran along a limb and leaped to the next tree, where he hid in a knot hole, just his eyes visible, watching his garner keenly out of the darkness.

Meeko has no patience. Three or four times he showed himself nervously. Fortunately for me, the jay had found some excitement to keep his rattle-brain busy for a moment. A flash of blue, and he came stealing back, just as Meeko had settled himself for more watching. After much peeking and listening the jay flew down to the storehouse, and Meeko, unable to contain himself a moment longer at sight of the thief, jumped out of his hiding and came



Charles Copeland

Hurling threats and vituperation ahead of him

rushing along the limb, hurling threats and vituperation ahead of him. The jay fluttered off, screaming derision. Meeko followed, hurling more abuse, but soon gave up the chase and came back to his chestnuts. It was curious to watch him there, sitting motionless and intent, his nose close down to his treasure, trying to compute his loss. Then he stuffed his cheeks full and began carrying his hoard off to another hiding place.

The autumn woods are full of such little comedies. Jays, crows, and squirrels are all hiding away winter's supplies, and no matter how great the abundance, not one of them can resist the temptation to steal or to break into another's garner.

Meeko is a poor provider; he would much rather live on buds and bark and apple seeds and fir cones, and what he can steal from others in the winter, than bother himself with laying up supplies of his own. When the spring comes he goes a-hunting and is for a season the most villainous of nest-robbers. Every bird in the woods then

hates him, takes a jab at him, and cries *thief!* *thief!* wherever he goes.



On a trout brook, once, I had a curious sense of comradeship with Meeko. It was in the early spring, when all the wild things make holiday, and man goes a-fishing. Near the brook a red squirrel had tapped a maple tree with his teeth and was tasting the sweet sap as it came up scantily. Seeing him and remembering my own boyhood, I cut a little hollow into the bark of a black birch tree and, when it brimmed full, drank the sap with immense satisfaction. Meeko stopped his own drinking to watch, then to scold and denounce me roundly.

While my cup was filling again I went down to the brook and took a wary old trout from his den under the end of a log, where the foam bubbles were dancing merrily. When I went back, thirsting for another sweet draught from the same spring, Meeko had emptied it to the last drop, and had his nose down in the bottom of my cup catching the sap as it welled up with an

abundance that must have surprised him.
When I went away quietly he followed me
through the wood to the pool at the edge
of the meadow, to see what I would do
next.

21

*Meeko
The
Mischief-maker*



Wherever you go in the wilderness you find Meeko ahead of you, and all the best camping grounds preëmpted by him. Even on the islands he seems to own the prettiest spots, and disputes mightily your right to stay there; though he is generally glad enough of your company to share his loneliness, and shows it plainly.



Once I found him living all by himself on an island in the middle of a wilderness lake, with no company whatever except a family of mink, who are his enemies. He had probably crossed on the ice in the late spring, and while he was busy here and there with his explorations the ice broke up, cutting off his retreat to the mainland, which was too



*Meeko
The
Mischief-maker*

far away for his swimming. So he was a prisoner for the long summer, and welcomed me gladly to share his exile. He was the only red squirrel I ever met that never scolded me roundly at least once a day. His loneliness had made him quite tame. Most of the time he lived within sight of my tent door. Not even Simmo's axe, though it made him jump twice from the top of a spruce, could keep him long away. He had twenty ways of getting up an excitement, and whenever he barked out in the woods I knew that it was simply to call me to see his discovery — a new nest, a loon that swam up close, a thieving muskrat, a hawk that rested on a dead stub, the mink family eating my fish heads, — and when I stole out to see what it was, he would run ahead, barking and chuckling at having some one to share his interests with him.

In such places squirrels use the ice for occasional journeys to the mainland. Sometimes also, when the waters are calm, they swim over. Hunters have told me that when the breeze is fair they make use of a

floating bit of wood, sitting up straight with tail curled over their backs, making a sail of their bodies — just as an Indian, with no knowledge of sailing whatever, puts a spruce bush in a bow of his canoe and lets the wind do his work for him.

23

*Meeko
The
Mischief-maker*



That would be the sight of a lifetime, to see Meeko sailing his boat; but I have no doubt whatever that it is true. The only red squirrel that I ever saw in the water fell in by accident. He swam rapidly to a floating board, shook himself, sat up with his tail raised along his back, and began to dry himself. After a little he saw that the slight breeze was setting him farther from shore. He began to chatter excitedly, and changed his position two or three times, evidently trying to catch the wind right. Finding that it was of no use, he plunged in again and swam easily to land.

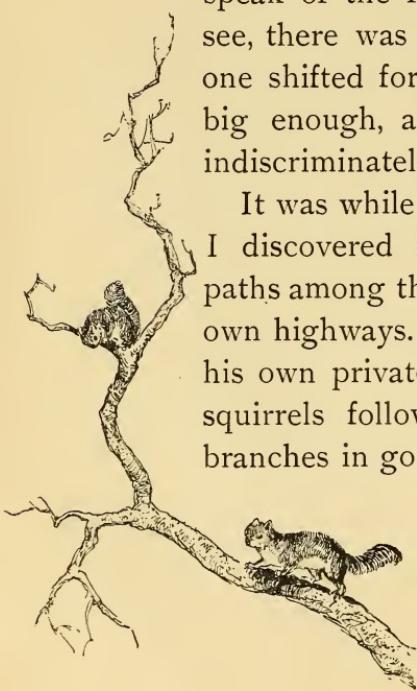
That he lives and thrives in the wilderness, spite of enemies and hunger and winter cold, is a tribute to his wits. He never hibernates, except in severe storms, when for a few days he lies close in his den. Hawks



and owls and weasels and martens hunt him continually; yet he more than holds his own in the big woods, which would lose some of their charm if their vast silences were not sometimes broken by his petty scoldings.

As with most wild creatures, the squirrels that live in touch with civilization are much keener witted than their wilderness brethren. The most interesting one I ever knew lived in the trees just outside my dormitory window, in a New England college town. He was the patriarch of a large family, and the greatest thief and rascal among them. I speak of the family, but, so far as I could see, there was very little family life. Each one shifted for himself the moment he was big enough, and stole from all the others indiscriminately.

It was while watching these squirrels that I discovered first that they have regular paths among the trees, as well defined as our own highways. Not only has each squirrel his own private paths and ways, but all the squirrels follow certain courses along the branches in going from one tree to another.



Even the strange squirrels, which ventured at times into the grove, followed these highways as if they had been used to them all their lives.

25

*Meeko
the
Mischief-maker*

On a recent visit to the old dormitory I watched the squirrels for a while, and found that they used exactly the same paths,— up the trunk of a big oak to a certain boss, along a branch to a certain crook, a jump to a linden twig and so on, making use of one of the highways that I had watched them following ten years before. Yet this course was not the shortest between two points, and there were a hundred other branches that they might have used.

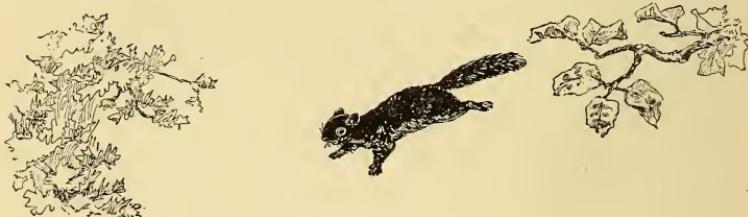
I had the good fortune, one morning, to see Meeko the patriarch make a new path for himself that none of the others ever followed. He had a home den over a hallway, and a hiding place for acorns in a hollow linden. Between the two was a driveway; but though the branches arched over it from either side, the jump was too great for him to take. He would rush out as if determined to try it, time after time, but always his courage failed

him; he had to go down the oak trunk and cross the driveway on the ground, where numberless straying dogs were always ready to chase him.



*Meeko
The
Mischief-maker*

One morning I saw him run twice in succession at the jump, only to turn back. But the air was keen and bracing, and he felt its inspiration. He drew farther back, then came rushing along the oak branch, and before he had time to be afraid, hurled himself across the chasm. He landed fairly on



a maple twig, with several inches to spare, and hung there with claws and teeth, swaying up and down gloriously. Then, chattering his delight at himself, he ran down the maple, back across the driveway, and tried the jump three times in succession to be sure he could do it.

After that he sprang across frequently. But I noticed that whenever the branches were wet with rain or sleet he never attempted it; and he never tried the return jump, which was uphill, and which he seemed to know by instinct was too much to attempt.

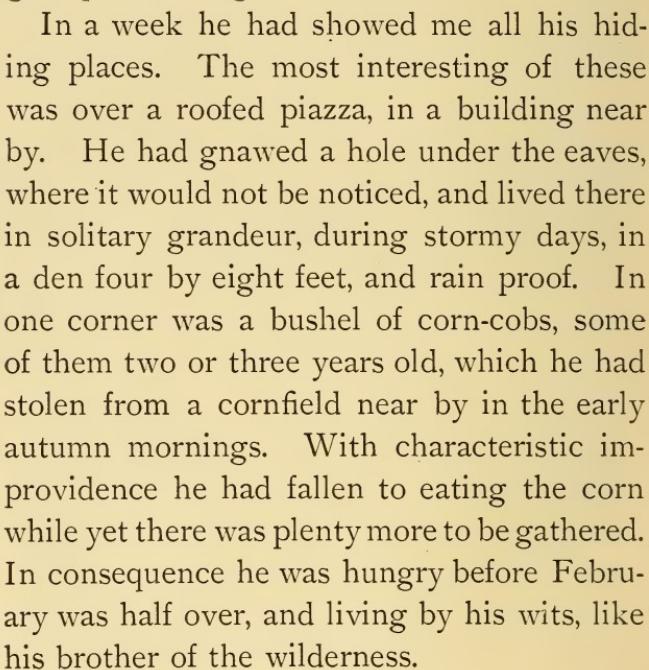
When I began feeding him, in the cold winter days, he showed me many curious bits of his life. First I put some nuts near the top of an old well, among the stones of which he used to hide things in the autumn. Long after he had eaten all his store, he would come and search the crannies among the stones to see if perchance he had overlooked any trifles. When he found a handful of shagbarks, one morning, his astonishment knew no bounds. His first thought was that he had forgotten them all these hungry days, and he promptly ate the biggest within sight of the store, a thing I never saw a squirrel do before. His second thought — I could see it in his changed attitude, his sudden creepings and hidings — was that some other squirrel had hidden them

there since his last visit. Whereupon he carried them all off and hid them in a broken linden branch.



*Meeko
The
Mischief-maker*

Then I tossed him peanuts, throwing them first far away, then nearer and nearer till he would come to my window-sill. And when I woke one morning he was sitting there looking in at the window, waiting for me to get up and bring his breakfast.



In a week he had showed me all his hiding places. The most interesting of these was over a roofed piazza, in a building near by. He had gnawed a hole under the eaves, where it would not be noticed, and lived there in solitary grandeur, during stormy days, in a den four by eight feet, and rain proof. In one corner was a bushel of corn-cobs, some of them two or three years old, which he had stolen from a cornfield near by in the early autumn mornings. With characteristic improvidence he had fallen to eating the corn while yet there was plenty more to be gathered. In consequence he was hungry before February was half over, and living by his wits, like his brother of the wilderness.





The other squirrels soon noticed his journeys to my window, and presently they too came for their share. Spite of his fury in driving them away, they managed in twenty ways to circumvent him. It was most interesting, while he sat on my window-sill eating peanuts, to see the nose and eyes of another squirrel peering over the crotch of the nearest tree, watching the proceedings from his hiding place. Then I would give Meeko five or six peanuts at once. Instantly the old hiding instinct would come back; he would start away, taking as much of his store as he could carry with him. The moment he was gone, out would come a squirrel from his concealment and carry off all the peanuts that remained.

Meeko's wrath when he returned was most comical. The Indian legend is true as gospel to squirrel nature. If he returned unexpectedly and caught one of the intruders, there was always a furious chase and a deal of scolding and squirrel jabber before peace was restored and the peanuts eaten.



Once, when he had hidden a dozen or more nuts in the broken linden branch, a very small squirrel came prowling along and discovered the store. In an instant he was all alertness, peeking, listening, exploring, till quite sure that the coast was clear, when he rushed away headlong with a mouthful.

He did not return that day; but the next morning early I saw him do the same thing. An hour later Meeko appeared and, finding nothing on the window-sill, went to the linden. Half his store of yesterday was gone. Curiously enough, he did not suspect at first that they were stolen. Meeko is always quite sure that nobody knows his secrets. He searched the tree over, went to his other hiding places, came back, counted his peanuts, then searched the ground beneath, thinking, no doubt, the wind must have blown them out—all this before he had tasted a peanut of those that remained.

Slowly it dawned upon him that he had been robbed and there was an outburst of wrath. But instead of carrying what were

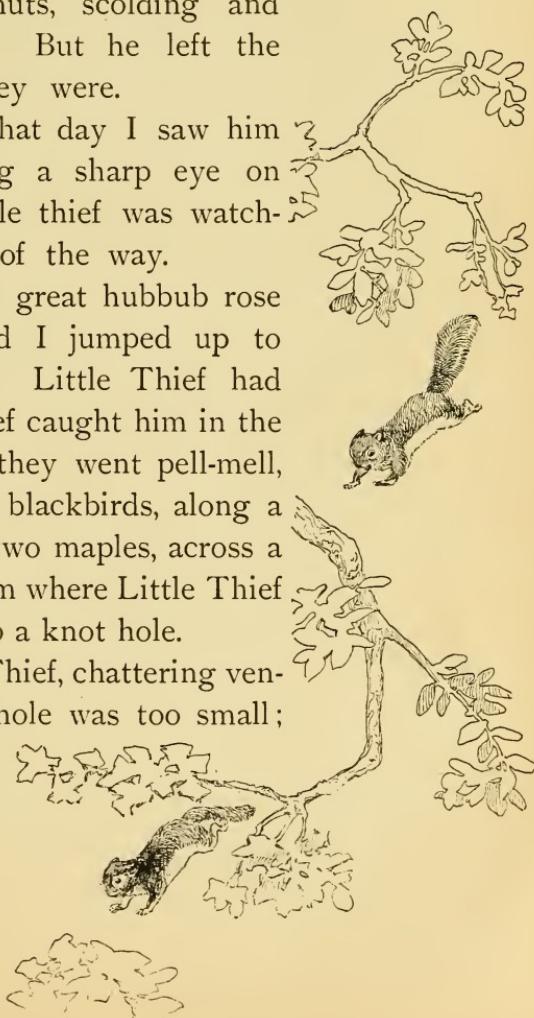
*Meeko
The
Mischief-maker*

left to another place, he left them where they were, still without eating, and hid himself near by to watch. I neglected a lecture in philosophy to see the proceedings, but nothing happened. Meeko's patience soon gave out, or else he grew hungry, for he ate two or three of his scanty supply of peanuts, scolding and threatening to himself. But he left the rest carefully where they were.

Two or three times that day I saw him sneaking about, keeping a sharp eye on the linden; but the little thief was watching too, and kept out of the way.

Early next morning a great hubbub rose outside my window, and I jumped up to see what was going on. Little Thief had come back, and Big Thief caught him in the act of robbery. Away they went pell-mell, jabbering like a flock of blackbirds, along a linden branch, through two maples, across a driveway, and up a big elm where Little Thief whisked out of sight into a knot hole.

After him came Big Thief, chattering vengeance. But the knot hole was too small;



he could not get in. Twist and turn and push and threaten as he would, he could not get in; and Little Thief sat just inside jeering maliciously.



Meeko gave it up after a while and went off, nursing his wrath. Ten feet from the tree a thought struck him. He rushed away out of sight, making a great noise, then came back quietly and hid under an eave where he could watch the knot hole.

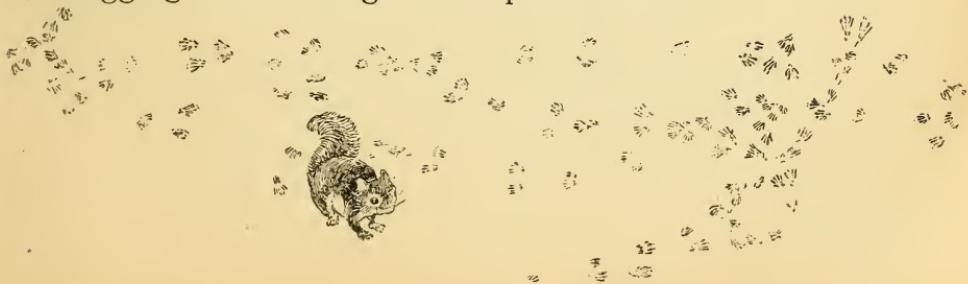
Presently Little Thief came out, rubbed his eyes, and looked all about. Through my glass I could see Meeko blinking and twitching under the dark eave, trying to control his anger. Little Thief ventured to a branch a few feet away from his refuge, and Big Thief, unable to hold himself a moment longer, rushed out, firing a volley of direful threats ahead of him. In a flash Little Thief was back in his knot hole and the comedy began all over again.

I never saw how it ended; but for a day or two there was an unusual amount of chasing and scolding going on outside my windows.



It was this same big squirrel that first showed me a curious trick of hiding. Whenever he found a handful of nuts on my window-sill and suspected that other squirrels were watching to share the bounty, he had a way of hiding them all very rapidly. He would never carry them direct to his various garners; first, because these were too far away, and the other squirrels would steal while he was gone; second, because, with hungry eyes watching somewhere, they might follow and find out where he habitually kept things. So he used to hide them all on the ground, under the leaves in autumn, under snow in winter, and all within sight of the window-sill, where he could watch the store as he hurried to and fro. Then, at his leisure, he would dig them up and carry them off to his den, two cheekfuls at a time.

Each nut was hidden by itself; never so much as two in one spot. When he hid one under the snow he would make tracks criss-cross in every direction, so that no one would notice the spot where he had been digging. For a long time it puzzled me to





know how he remembered so many places. I noticed first that he would always start from a certain point, a tree or a stone, with his burden. When it was hidden he would come back by the shortest route to the window-sill; but with his new mouthful he would always go first to the tree or stone he had selected, and from there search out a new hiding place.

It was many days before I noticed that, starting from one fixed point, he generally worked toward a tree or a rock in the distance. Then his secret was out; he hid things in a line. Next day he would come back, start from his fixed point and move slowly towards the distant one till his nose told him he was over a peanut, which he dug up and ate or carried away to his den. But he always seemed to distrust himself; for on hungry days he would go over two or three of his old lines in the hope of finding a mouthful that he had overlooked.

This method was used only when he had a large supply to dispose of hurriedly, and not always then. Meeko is a careless fellow

and soon forgets. When I gave him only a few to dispose of, he hid them helter-skelter among the leaves, forgetting some of them afterwards and enjoying the rare delight of stumbling upon them when he was hungriest — much like a child whom I saw once giving himself a sensation. He would throw his penny on the ground, go round the house, and saunter back with his hands in his pockets till he saw the penny, which he pounced upon with almost the joy of treasure-trove in the highway.

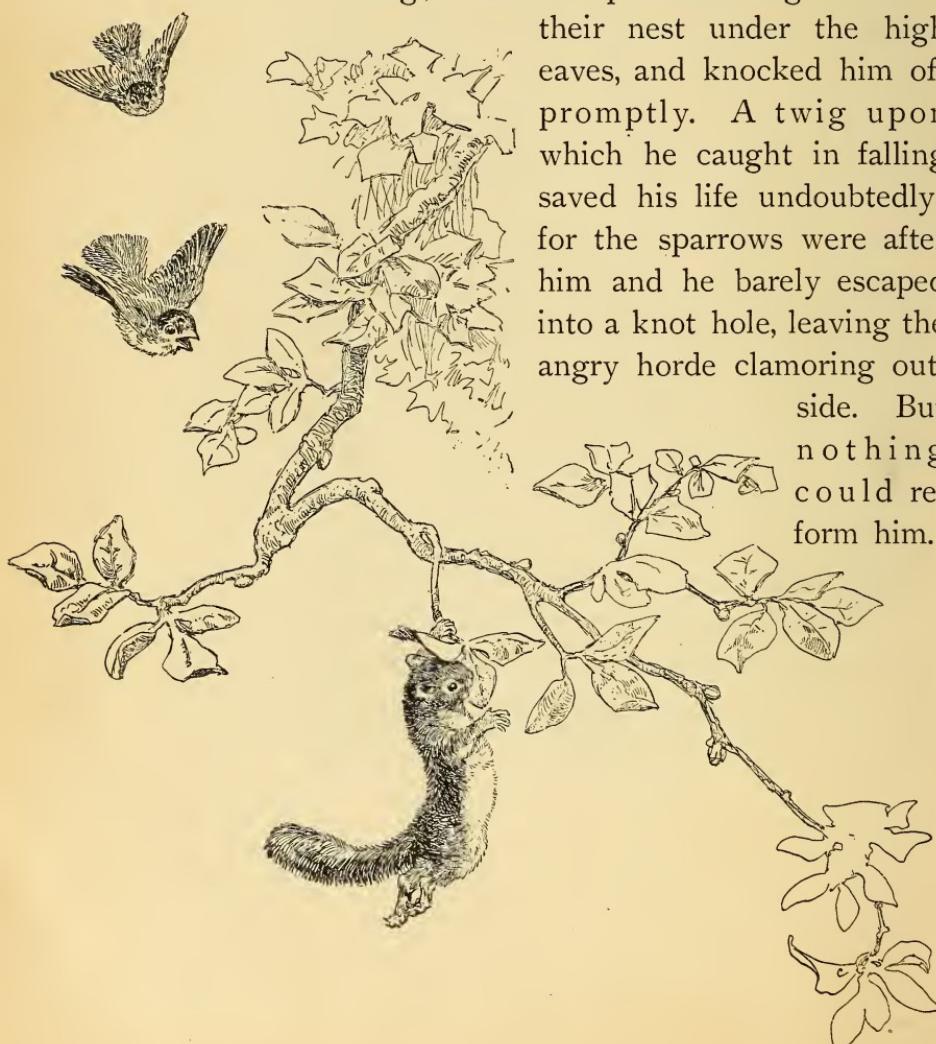
Meeko made a sad end — a fate which he deserved well enough, but which I had to pity, spite of myself. When the spring came on, he went back to evil ways. Sap was sweet and buds were luscious with the first swelling of tender leaves; spring rains had washed out plenty of acorns in the crannies under the big oak, and there were fresh-roasted peanuts still at the corner windowsill, within easy jump of a linden twig; but he took to watching the robins to see where they nested, and when the young were hatched he came no more to my window. Twice I saw



*Meeko
The
Mischief-maker*

him with fledgelings in his mouth; and I drove him day after day from a late clutch of robin's eggs that I could watch from my study.

He had warnings enough. Once some students, who had been friendly all winter, stoned him out of a tree where he was nest-robbing; once the sparrows caught him in their nest under the high eaves, and knocked him off promptly. A twig upon which he caught in falling saved his life undoubtedly; for the sparrows were after him and he barely escaped into a knot hole, leaving the angry horde clamoring outside. But nothing could reform him.



One morning, at daylight, a great crying of robins brought me to the window. Meeko was running along a limb, the first of the fledgelings in his mouth. After him were five or six robins, whom the parents' danger cry had brought to the rescue. They were all excited and tremendously in earnest. They cried *thief! thief!* and swooped at him like hawks. Their cries speedily brought a score of other birds, some to watch, others to join in the punishment.

Meeko dropped the young bird and ran for his den; but a robin dashed recklessly in his face and knocked him fair from the tree. That and the fall of the fledgeling excited the birds more than ever. This thieving bird-eater was not invulnerable. A dozen rushed at him on the ground and left the marks of their beaks on his coat before he could reach the nearest tree.

Again he rushed for his den, but wherever he turned now angry wings fluttered over him and beaks jabbed in his face. Raging but frightened, he sat up to snarl wickedly. Like a flash a robin hurled himself down,

caught the squirrel just under his ear and knocked him again to the ground.



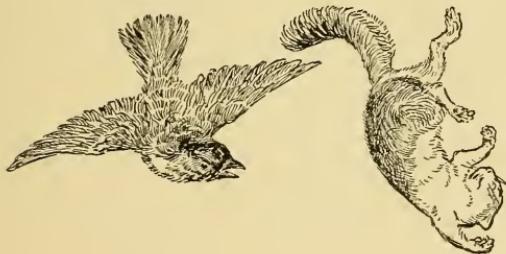
Things began to look dark for Meeko. The birds grew bolder and angrier every minute. When he started to climb a tree he was hurled off twice ere he reached a crotch and drew himself down into it. He was safe there with his back against a big limb; they could not get at him from behind. But the angry clamor in front frightened him, and again he started for his place of refuge. His footing was unsteady now and his head dizzy from the blows he had received. Before he had gone half a limb's length he was again on the ground, with a dozen birds pecking at him as they swooped over.

With his last strength he snapped viciously at his foes and rushed to the linden. My window was open, and he came creeping, hurrying towards it on the branch over which he had often capered so lightly in the winter days. Over him clamored the birds, forgetting all fear of me in their hatred of the nest-robber.

A dozen times he was struck on the way, but at every blow he clung to the branch with claws and teeth, then staggered on doggedly, making no defense. His whole thought now was to reach the window-sill.

At the place where he always jumped he stopped and began to sway, trying to summon strength for the effort. He knew it was too much, but it was his last hope. At the instant of his spring a robin swooped in his face; another caught him a side blow in mid-air, and he fell heavily to the stones below.—*Sic semper tyrannis!* yelled the robins, scattering wildly as I ran down the steps to save him, if it were not too late.

He died in my hands a moment later, with curious maliciousness nipping my finger sharply at the last gasp. He was the only

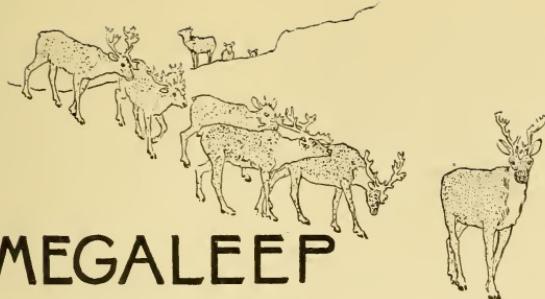


 *Meeko*
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squirrel of the lot who knew how to hide in a line; and never a one since his day has taken the jump from oak to maple over the driveway.

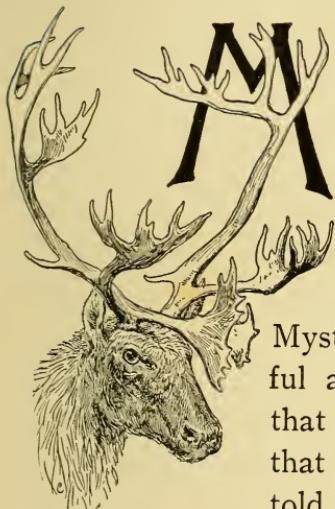




MEGALEEP THE WANDERER



MEGALEEP THE WANDERER



MEGALEEP is the big woodland caribou of the northern wilderness. His Milicete name means The Wandering One, but it ought to mean the Mysterious and the Changeful as well. If you hear that he is bold and fearless, that is true; and if you are told that he is shy and wary and inapproachable, that is also true. For he is never the same two days in succession. At once shy and bold, solitary and gregarious; restless as a cloud, yet clinging to his feeding grounds, spite of wolves and hunters, till he leaves them of his own free will; wild as Kakagos the raven, but inquisitive as a

blue jay,—he is the most fascinating and the least known of all the deer.



I had always heard and read of Megaleep as an awkward, ungainly animal, but almost my first glimpse of him scattered all that to the winds and set my nerves a-tingling in a way that they still remember. It was on a great chain of barrens in the New Brunswick wilderness. I was following the trail of a herd of caribou one day, when far ahead a strange clacking sound came ringing across the snow in the crisp winter air. I ran ahead to a point of woods that cut off my view from a five-mile barren, only to catch breath in astonishment and drop to cover behind a scrub spruce. Away up the barren my caribou, a big herd of them, were coming like an express train straight towards me. At first I could make out only a great cloud of steam, a whirl of flying snow, and here and there the angry shake of wide antlers or the gleam of a black muzzle. The loud clacking of their hoofs, sweeping nearer and nearer, gave a snap, a tingle, a wild exhilaration



to their rush which made one want to shout and swing his hat. Presently I could make out the individual animals through the cloud of vapor that drove down the wind before them. They were going at a splendid trot, rocking easily from side to side like pacing colts,—power, grace, tirelessness in every stride. Their heads were high, their muzzles up, the antlers well back on heaving shoulders. Jets of steam burst from their nostrils at every bound; for the thermometer was twenty below zero, and the air snapping. A cloud of snow whirled out and up behind them; through it the antlers waved like bare oak boughs in the wind; the sound of their hoofs was like the clicking of mighty castanets.—“Oh for a sledge and bells!” I thought; for Santa Claus never had such a team.

So they came on swiftly, magnificently, straight on to the cover behind which I crouched with nerves thrilling as at a cavalry charge, till I sprang to my feet with a shout and swung my hat; for, as there was meat enough in camp, I had small wish to use



my rifle, and no desire whatever to stand that rush at close quarters and be run down. There was a moment of wild confusion out on the barren just in front of me. The long swinging trot, that caribou never change if they can help it, was broken into an awkward jumping gallop. The front rank reared, plunged, snorted a warning, but were forced onward by the pressure behind. Then the leading bulls gave a few mighty bounds, which brought them close up to me, but left a clear space for the frightened, crowding animals behind. The swiftest shot ahead to the lead; the great herd lengthened out from its compact mass; swerved easily to the left, as at a word of command; crashed through the fringe of evergreen in which I had been hiding,—out into the open with a wild plunge and a loud cracking of hoofs, where they all settled into their wonderful trot again and kept on steadily across the barren below.

That was the sight of a lifetime. One who saw it could never again think of caribou as ungainly animals.



Charles Lovett

The leading bulls gave a few mighty bounds

*Megaleep
the
Wanderer.*



Megaleep belongs to the tribe of Ishmael. Indeed, his Latin name, as well as his Indian one, signifies The Wanderer; and if you watch him a little while you will understand perfectly why he is so called. The first time I ever met him in summer was at twilight, on a wilderness lake. I was sitting in my canoe by the inlet, wondering what kind of bait to use for a big trout which lived in an eddy behind the rock, and which disdained everything I offered him. The swallows were busy, skimming low and taking the young mosquitoes as they rose from the water. One dipped to the surface near the eddy. As he came down I saw a swift gleam in the depths below. He touched the water; there was a swirl, a splash — and the swallow was gone. The trout had him.

Then a cow caribou came out of the woods to a grassy point above me to drink. First she wandered all over the point, making it look afterwards as if a herd had passed. Then she took a sip of water by a rock, crossed to my side of the point and took a sip there; then to the end of the point, and



another sip; then back to the first place. A nibble of grass, and she waded far out from shore to sip there; then back, with a nod to a lily pad, and a sip nearer the brook. Finally she meandered a long way up the shore out of sight, and when I picked up the paddle to go, she came back again. Truly a *Wandergeist* of the woods, like the plover of the coast, who never knows what he wants, nor why he circles about so, nor where he is going next.

If you follow the herds over the barrens and through the forest in winter, you find the same wandering, unsatisfied creature. And if you are a sportsman and a keen hunter, with well-established ways of trailing and stalking, you will be driven to desperation a score of times before you get acquainted with Megaleep. He travels enormous distances without any known object. His trail is everywhere; he is himself nowhere. You scour the country for a week, crossing innumerable trails, thinking the surrounding woods must be full of caribou; then a man in a lumber camp, where you are



overtaken by night, tells you that he saw the herd you are after down on the Renous barrens, thirty miles below. You go there, and have the same experience,—signs everywhere, old signs, new signs, but never a caribou. And, ten to one, while you are there, the caribou are sniffing your snowshoe track suspiciously back on the barrens that you have just left.

Even in feeding, when you are hot on their trail and steal forward, expecting to see them every moment, it is the same endless story. They dig a hole through four feet of packed snow to nibble the reindeer lichen that grows everywhere on the barrens. Before it is half eaten they wander off to the next barren and dig a larger hole; then away to the woods for the gray-green hanging moss that grows on the spruces. Here is a fallen tree half covered with the rich food. Megaleep nibbles a bite or two, then wanders away and away in search of another tree like the one he has just left.

And when you find him at last, the chances are still against you. You are stealing





forward cautiously when a fresh sign attracts attention. You stop to examine it a moment. Something gray, dim, misty, seems to drift like a cloud through the trees ahead. You scarcely notice it till, on your right, a stir, and another cloud, and another—the caribou, quick, a score of them! But before your rifle is up and you have found the sights, the gray things melt into the gray woods and drift away; and the stalk begins all over again.

The reason for this restlessness is not far to seek. Megaleep's ancestors followed regular migrations in spring and autumn, like the birds, on the unwooded plains beyond the Arctic Circle. Megaleep never migrates; but the old instinct is in him and will not let him rest. So he wanders through the year, and is never satisfied.

Fortunately nature has been kind to Megaleep, in providing him with means to gratify his wandering disposition. In winter, moose and red deer must gather into yards and stay there. With the first heavy storm of December, they gather in small bands on the hard-wood ridges, and begin to make paths in the



snow,—long, twisted, crooked paths, running for miles in every direction, crossing and recrossing in a tangle utterly hopeless to any head save that of a deer or moose. These paths they keep tramped down and more or less open all winter, so as to feed on the twigs and bark growing on either side. Were it not for this curious habit, a single severe winter would leave hardly a moose or a deer alive in the woods; for their hoofs are sharp and sink deep; with six feet of snow on a level they can run scarcely a mile outside their paths without becoming hopelessly stalled or exhausted.

It is this great tangle of paths, by the way, which constitutes a deer or a moose yard.

But Megaleep the Wanderer makes no such provision; he depends upon Mother Nature to take care of him. In summer he is brown, like the great tree trunks among which he moves unseen. Then the frog of his foot expands and grows spongy, so that he can cling to the mountain-side like a goat, or move silently over the dead leaves. In winter he becomes a soft gray, the better to



fade into a snowstorm, or to stand concealed in plain sight on the edges of the gray, desolate barrens that he loves. Then the frog of his foot arches up out of the way; the edges of his hoof grow sharp and shell-like, so that he can travel over glare ice without slipping, and cut the crust to dig down for the moss upon which he feeds. The hoofs, moreover, are very large and deeply cleft, so as to spread widely when his weight is on them. When you first find his track in the snow, you rub your eyes, thinking that a huge ox must have passed that way. The dew-claws are also large, and the ankle joint so flexible that it lets them down upon the snow. So Megaleep has a kind of natural snowshoe with which he moves easily over the crust, and, except in very deep, soft snows, wanders at will, while other deer are prisoners in their yards. It is the snapping of these loose hoofs and ankle joints that makes the merry clacking sound as caribou run.

Sometimes, however, they overestimate their abilities, and their wandering disposition brings them into trouble. Once I

found a herd of seven up to their backs in soft snow, and tired out,—a strange condition for caribou to be in. They were taking the affair philosophically, resting till they should gather strength to flounder to some spruce tops, where moss was plenty. When I approached gently on snowshoes (I had been hunting them diligently the week before; but this put a different face on the matter) they gave a bound or two, then settled deep in the snow, and turned their heads and said with their great soft eyes: "You have hunted us. Here we are, at your mercy."

They were very much frightened at first; then I thought they grew a bit curious, as I laid my rifle aside and sat down peaceably in the snow to watch them. One—a doe, more exhausted than the others, and famished— even nibbled a bit of moss that I pushed near her with a stick. I had picked it with gloves, so that the smell of my hand was not on it. After an hour or so, if I moved softly, they let me approach quite up to them without shaking their antlers or





renewing their desperate attempts to flounder away. But I did not touch them. That is a degradation which no wild creature will permit when he is free; and I would not take advantage of their helplessness.

"Did they starve in the snow?" you ask. Oh, no! I went to the place next day and found that they had gained the spruce tops, ploughing through the snow in great bounds, following the track of the strongest, which went ahead to break the way. There they fed and rested, then went to some dense thickets where they passed the night. In a day or two the snow settled and hardened, and they took to their wandering again.

Later, in hunting, I crossed their tracks several times, and once I saw them across a barren; but I left them undisturbed, to follow other trails. We had eaten together; they had fed from my hand; and there is no older truce on earth than that; not even in the unchanging East, where it originated.

Megaleep in a storm is a most curious creature, the nearest thing to a ghost to be

found in the woods. More than other animals he feels the falling barometer. His movements at such times drive you to desperation, if you are following him; for he wanders unceasingly. When the storm breaks he has a way of appearing suddenly, as if he were seeking you, when, by his trail, you thought him miles ahead. And the way he disappears—just melts into the thick driving flakes and the shrouded trees—is most uncanny. Eight or ten caribou once played hide-and-seek with me that way, giving me vague glimpses here and there, drawing near to get my scent, yet keeping me looking up wind into the driving snow, where I could see nothing distinctly. And all the while they drifted about like so many huge flakes of the storm, watching my every movement, seeing me perfectly.

At such times they fear little, and even lay aside their usual caution. I remember trailing a large herd, one day, from early morning, keeping near them all the time and jumping them half a dozen times, yet never getting a glimpse because of their extreme



watchfulness. For some reason they were unwilling to leave a small chain of barrens. Perhaps they knew the storm was coming, when they would be safe; and so, instead of swinging off into a ten-mile straightaway trot at the first alarm, they kept dodging back and forth within a two-mile circle. At last, late in the afternoon, I followed the trail to the edge of dense evergreen thickets. Caribou generally rest in open woods or on the windward edge of a barren. Eyes for the open, nose for the cover, is their motto. And I thought, "They know perfectly well I am following them, and so have lain down in that tangle. If I go in, they will hear me; a wood mouse could hardly keep quiet in such a place. If I go round, they will catch my scent. If I wait, so will they. If I jump them, the scrub will cover their retreat perfectly."

As I sat down in the snow to think it over, a heavy rush, deep within the thicket, told me that something—not I, certainly—had again started them. Suddenly the air darkened, and above the excitement of the hunt I felt the storm coming. A storm in



the woods is no joke when you are six miles from camp without axe or blanket. I broke away from the trail and started for the head of the second barren on the run. If I could make that, I was safe ; for there was a stream hard by, which led to camp ; and one cannot very well lose a stream, even in a snow-storm. But before I was out of the big timber the flakes were driving thick and soft in my face. Another half-mile, and one could not see fifty feet in any direction. Still I kept on, holding my course by the wind and my compass. Then, at the foot of the second barren, my snowshoes stumbled into great depressions in the snow, and I found myself on the fresh trail of my caribou again. "If I am lost, I will at least have a caribou steak, and a skin to wrap me up in," I said, and plunged after them. As I went, the old Mother Goose rhyme of nursery days came back and set itself to hunting music :

Bye, baby bunting,
Daddy's gone a-hunting,
For to catch a rabbit skin
To wrap the baby bunting in.



Presently I began to sing it aloud. It cheered one up in the storm, and the lilt of it kept time to the leaping kind of gallop, which is the easiest way to run on snow-shoes: "Bye, baby bunting; bye, baby bunting—Hello!"

A dark mass loomed suddenly before me on the open barren. The storm lightened a bit, before setting in heavier; and there were the caribou, just in front of me, standing in a compact mass, the weaker ones in the middle. They had no thought nor fear of me, apparently; they showed no sign of anger or uneasiness. Indeed, they barely moved aside as I snowshoed up, in plain sight, without any precaution whatever. And these were the same animals that had fled upon my approach at daylight, and that had escaped me all day with marvelous cunning.

As with other deer, the storm is Megaleep's natural protector. When it comes he thinks that he is safe; that nobody can see him; that the falling snow will fill his tracks and kill his scent; and that whatever



follows must speedily seek cover for itself. So he gives up watching, and lies down where he will. So far as his natural enemies are concerned, he is safe in this; for lynx and wolf and panther seek shelter with a falling barometer. They can neither see nor smell; and they are all afraid. I have often noticed that, among all animals and birds, from the least to the greatest, there is always a truce when the storms are out.

But the most curious thing I ever stumbled into was a caribou school. That sounds queer; but it is more common in the wilderness than one thinks. All gregarious animals have perfectly well-defined social regulations, which the young must learn and respect. To learn them, they go to school in their own interesting way.

The caribou I am speaking of now are all woodland caribou—larger, finer animals than the barren-ground caribou of the desolate unwooded regions farther north. In summer they live singly, rearing their young in deep forest seclusions. There each one does as he pleases. So when you meet a caribou in



summer, he is a different creature, and has more unknown and curious ways than when he runs with the herd in midwinter.

I remember a solitary old bull that lived on the mountain-side opposite my camp, one summer,—a most interesting mixture of fear and boldness, of reserve and intense curiosity. After I had followed him a few times and he found that my purpose was wholly peaceable, he took to hunting me in the same way, just to find out who I was, and what queer thing I was doing. Sometimes I would see him at sunset, on a dizzy cliff across the lake, watching for the curl of smoke or the coming of a canoe. And when I jumped in for a swim and went splashing, dog-paddle way, about the island where my tent was, he would walk about in the greatest excitement, and start a dozen times to come down; but always he ran back for another look, as if fascinated. Again he would come down on a burned point near the deep hole where I was fishing, and, hiding his body in the underbrush, would push his horns up into the bare branches of a



withered shrub, so as to make them inconspicuous, and stand watching me. As long as he was quiet, it was impossible to see him there; but I could always make him start nervously by flashing a looking-glass, or flopping a fish in the water, or whistling a jolly Irish jig. And when I tied a bright tomato can to a string and set it whirling round my head, or set my handkerchief for a flag on the end of my trout rod, then he could not stand it another minute, but came running down to the shore, to stamp and fidget and stare nervously, and scare himself with twenty alarms while trying to make up his mind to swim out and satisfy his burning desire to know all about it.— But I am forgetting the caribou schools.

Wherever there are barrens — treeless plains in the midst of dense forest — the caribou collect in small herds as winter comes on, following the old gregarious instinct. Then each one cannot do as he pleases any more; and it is for this winter and spring life together, when laws must be known, and the rights of the individual be

laid aside for the good of the herd, that the young are trained.



One afternoon in late summer I was drifting down the Toledi River, casting for trout, when a movement in the bushes ahead caught my attention. A great swampy tract of ground, covered with grass and low brush, spread out on either side the stream. From the canoe I made out two or three waving lines of bushes, where some animals were making their way through the swamp towards a strip of big timber, which formed a kind of island in the middle.

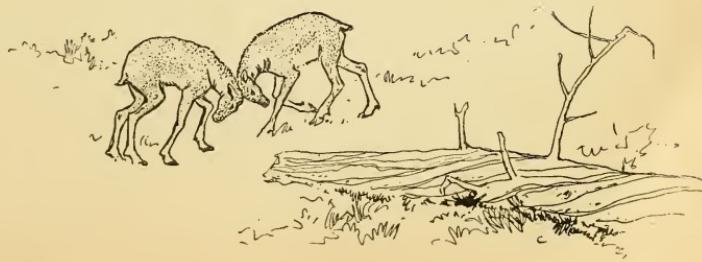
Pushing my canoe into the grass, I made for a point just astern of the nearest quivering line of bushes. A glance at a bit of soft ground showed me the trail of a mother caribou with her calf. I followed cautiously, the wind being in my favor. They were not hurrying, and I took good pains not to alarm them.

When I reached the timber and crept like a snake through the underbrush, there were the caribou, five or six mother animals and nearly twice as many little ones, well grown,



which had evidently just come in from all directions. They were gathered in a natural opening, fairly clear of bushes, with a fallen tree or two, which served a good purpose later. The sunlight fell across it in great golden bars, making light and shadow to play in; all around was the great marsh, giving protection from enemies; dense under-brush screened them from prying eyes—and this was their schoolroom.

The little ones were pushed out into the middle, away from the mothers to whom they clung instinctively, and were left to get acquainted with each other; which they did very shyly at first, like so many strange children. It was all new and curious, this meeting of their kind; for till now they had lived in dense solitudes, each one knowing no living creature save its own mother. Some were timid, and backed away as far as possible into the shadow, looking with wild, wide eyes from one to another of the little caribou, and bolting to their mothers' sides at every unusual movement. Others were bold, and took to butting at the first





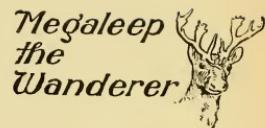
encounter. But careful, kindly eyes watched over them. Now and then a mother caribou would come from the shadows and push a little one gently from his retreat, under a bush, out into the company. Another would push her way between two heads that lowered at each other threateningly, and say with a warning shake of her head that butting was no good way to get along together. I had once thought, watching a herd on the barrens through my glasses, that they are the gentlest of animals with each other. Here in the little school, in the heart of the swamp, I found the explanation of things.

For over an hour I lay there and watched, my curiosity growing more eager every moment; for most of what I saw I could not comprehend, having no key, nor understanding why certain youngsters, who needed reproof according to my standards, were let alone, and others kept moving constantly, and still others led aside often to be talked to by their mothers. But at last came a lesson in which all joined, and which could

not be misunderstood, not even by a man.
It was the jumping lesson.

65

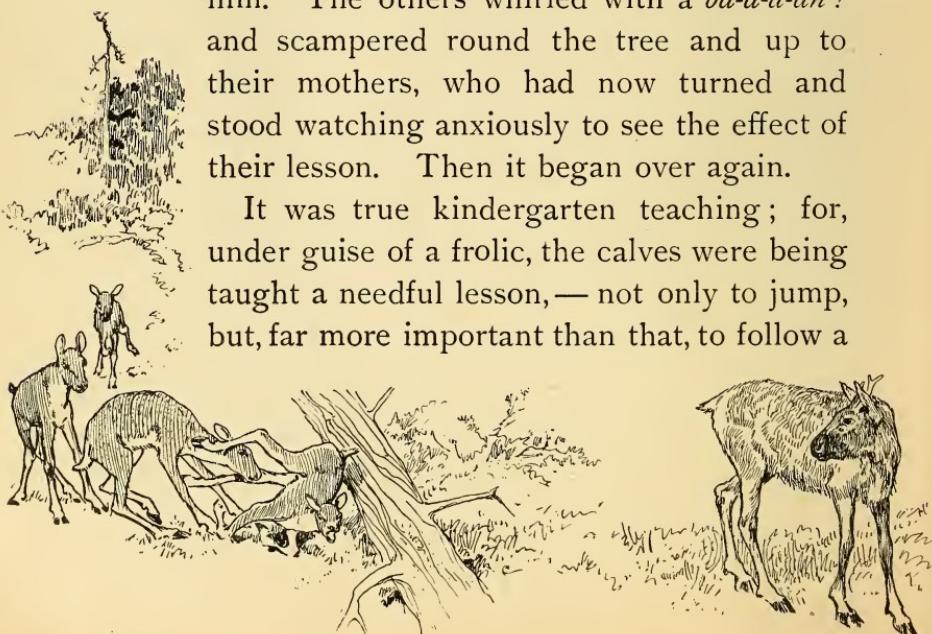
Caribou are naturally poor jumpers. Beside a deer, who often goes out of his way to jump a fallen tree just for the fun of it, they have no show whatever; though they can travel much farther in a day and much easier. Their gait is a swinging trot, from which it is impossible to jump; and if you frighten them out of their trot into a gallop and keep them at it, they soon grow exhausted. Countless generations on the northern wastes, where there is no need of jumping, have bred this habit, and modified their muscles accordingly. But now a race of caribou has moved south into the woods, where great trees lie fallen across the way, and where, if Megaleep is in a hurry or there is anybody behind him, jumping is a necessity. Still he does not like it, and avoids it whenever possible. The little ones, left to themselves, would always crawl under a tree, or trot round it. And this is another thing to overcome, and another lesson to be taught in the caribou school.





As I watched them, the mothers all came out from the shadows and began trotting round the opening, the little ones keeping close as possible each one to its mother's side. Then the old ones went faster; the calves were left in a long line stringing out behind. Suddenly the leader veered in to the edge of the timber and went over a fallen tree with a jump; the cows followed splendidly, rising on one side, falling gracefully on the other, like gray waves racing past the end of a jetty. But the first little one dropped his head obstinately at the tree and stopped short. The next one did the same thing; only he ran his head into the first one's legs and knocked them out from under him. The others whirled with a *ba-a-a-ah!* and scampered round the tree and up to their mothers, who had now turned and stood watching anxiously to see the effect of their lesson. Then it began over again.

It was true kindergarten teaching; for, under guise of a frolic, the calves were being taught a needful lesson,—not only to jump, but, far more important than that, to follow a



leader, and to go where he goes without question or hesitation. For the leaders on the barrens are wise old bulls that make no mistakes. Most of the little caribou took to the sport very well, and presently followed the mothers over the low hurdles. But a few were timid; and then came the most intensely interesting bit of the whole strange school, when a little one would be led to a tree and butted from behind till he took the jump.

There was no "consent of the governed" in that governing. The mother knew, and the calf did n't, just what was good for him.

It was this last lesson that broke up the school. Just in front of my hiding place a tree fell out into the opening. A mother caribou brought her calf up to this unsuspectingly, and leaped over, expecting the little one to follow. As she struck she whirled like a top and stood like a beautiful statue, her head pointing in my direction. Her eyes were bright with fear, the ears set forward, the nostrils spread to catch every tainted atom from the air. Then she turned and





glided silently away, the little one close to her side, looking up and touching her frequently, as if to whisper, *What is it? what is it?* but making no sound. There was no signal given, no alarm of any kind that I could understand; yet the lesson stopped instantly. The caribou glided away like shadows. Over across the opening a bush swayed; here and there a leaf quivered, as if something touched its branch. Then the schoolroom was empty and the woods all still.

There is another curious habit of Megaleep; and this one I am utterly at a loss to account for. When he is old and feeble, and the tireless muscles will no longer carry him with the herd over the wind-swept barrens, and he falls sick at last, he goes to a spot far away in the woods, where generations of his ancestors have preceded him, and there lays him down to die. It is the caribou burying ground; and all the animals of a certain district, or a certain herd, will go there when sick or sore wounded, if they have strength enough to reach the spot. For it is far away

from the scene of their summer homes and
their winter wanderings.

69

*Megaleep
the
Wanderer*



I know one such place, and visited it twice from my summer camp. It is in a dark tamarack swamp by a lonely lake, at the head of the Little-South-West Miramichi River, in New Brunswick. I found it, one summer, when trying to force my way from the big lake to a smaller one, where trout were plenty. In the midst of the swamp I stumbled upon a pair of caribou skeletons; which surprised me, for there were no hunters within a hundred miles, and at that time the lake had been for many years unvisited. I thought of fights between bucks, and bull moose,— how two bulls will sometimes lock horns in a rush, and are too weakened to break the lock, and so die together of exhaustion. Caribou are more peaceable; they rarely fight that way; and besides, the horns here were not locked together, but lying well apart. As I searched about, looking for the explanation of things, thinking of wolves, yet wondering why the bones were not gnawed, I found another skeleton, much older, than four or five more;



some quite fresh, others crumbling into mould. Bits of old bone and some splendid antlers were scattered here and there through the underbrush; and when I scraped away the dead leaves and moss, there were older bones and fragments mouldering beneath.

I scarcely understood the meaning of it at the time; but since then I have met men, Indians and hunters, who have spent much time in the wilderness, who speak of "bone yards" which they have discovered,— places where they can go at any time and be sure of finding a good set of caribou antlers. And they say that the caribou go there to die.

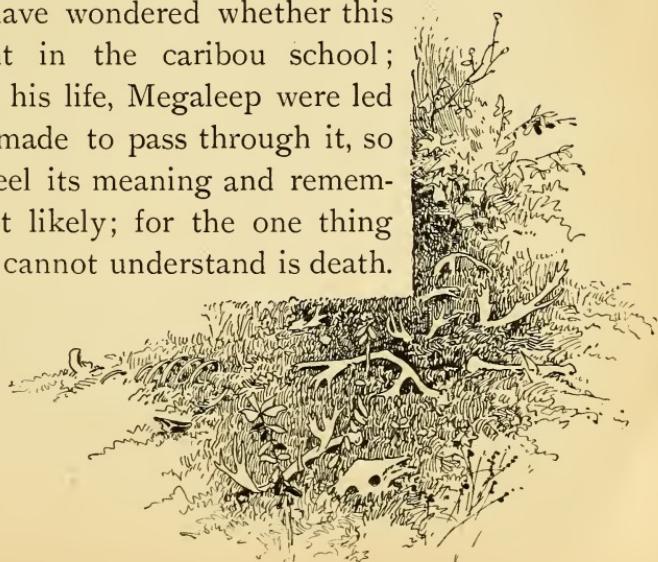
All animals, when feeble with age, or sickly, or wounded, have the habit of going away, deep into the loneliest coverts, and there lying down where the leaves will presently cover them. That is why one rarely finds a dead bird or animal in the woods, where thousands die yearly. Even your dog, that was born and lived by your house, often disappears when you thought him too feeble to walk. Death calls him gently; the old wolf stirs deep within him, and he goes away, where

*Megaleep
the
Wanderer*



the master he served will never find him. And so with your cat, which is only skin-deep a domestic animal; and so with your canary, which in death alone would be free, and beats his failing wings against the cage in which he lived so long content. But these all go away singly, each to his own place. The caribou is the only animal I know that remembers, when his separation comes, the ties which bound him to the herd, winter after winter, through sun and storm, in the forest where all was peace and plenty, on the lonely barrens where the gray wolf howled on his track; so that he turns, with his last strength, from the herd he is leaving to the greater herd which has gone before him—still following his leaders, remembering his first lesson to the end.

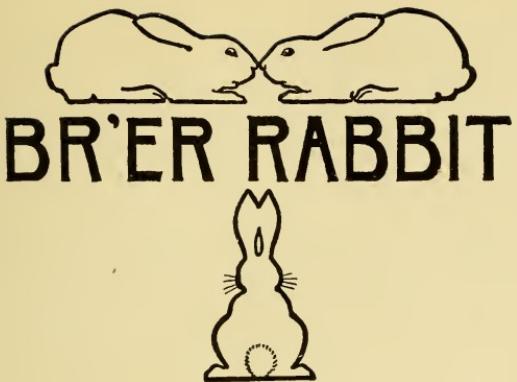
Sometimes I have wondered whether this also were taught in the caribou school; whether, once in his life, Megaleep were led to the spot and made to pass through it, so that he should feel its meaning and remember. That is not likely; for the one thing which an animal cannot understand is death.





And there were no signs of living caribou anywhere near the place that I discovered; though down at the other end of the lake their tracks were everywhere.

There are other questions, which one can only ask without answering. Is this silent gathering merely a tribute to the old law of the herd; or does Megaleep, with his last strength, still think to cheat his old enemy, and go where the wolf, that followed him all his life, shall not find him? How was his resting place first selected, and what leaders searched out the ground? What sound or sign, what murmur of wind in the pines, or lap of ripples on the shore, or song of the veery at twilight made them pause and say, *Here is the place?* How does he know, he whose thoughts are all of life and who never looked on death, where the great silent herd is that no caribou ever sees but once? And what strange instinct guides Megaleep to the spot where all his wanderings end at last?





BR'ER RABBIT

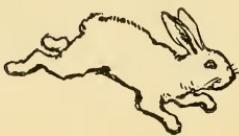


R'ER RABBIT is a funny fellow. No wonder that Uncle Remus makes him the hero of so many adventures. Uncle Remus had watched him, no doubt, on some moonlight night when he gathered his boon companions together for a frolic. In the heart of the woods it was, in a little opening where the moonlight came streaming in through the pines, making soft gray shadows for hide-and-seek, and where no prowling fox ever dreamed of looking.

With most of us, the acquaintance with Bunny is too limited for us to appreciate his frolicsome ways and his fun-loving disposition. The tame things which we see about country yards are often stupid, like a playful kitten spoiled by too much handling; and the flying glimpse of a bundle of brown fur,

scurrying helter-skelter through and over the huckleberry bushes, generally leaves us staring in astonishment at the swaying leaves where it disappeared, and wondering curiously what it was all about. It was only a brown rabbit that you almost stepped upon in your autumn walk through the woods.

Look under the crimson sumach yonder, there in the bit of brown grass, with the purple asters hanging over, and you will find his form, where he has been sitting all the morning and where he watched you all the way up the hill. But you need not follow; you will not find him again. He never runs straight; the swaying leaves there, where he disappeared, marked the beginning of his turn, whether to right or left you will never know. Now he has come around his circle and is near you again—watching you this minute, out of his bit of brown grass. As you move slowly away in the direction he took, peering here and there among the bushes, Bunny behind you sits up straight in his old form again, with his little paws

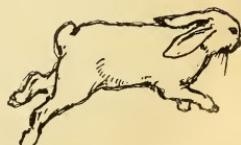
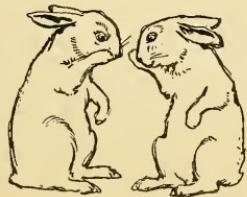


held very prim, his long ears pointed after you, and his deep brown eyes shining like the waters of a hidden spring among the asters. And he chuckles to himself, and thinks how he fooled you that time, sure.

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To see Br'er Rabbit at his best, one must turn hunter, and learn how to sit still and be patient. Only you must not hunt in the usual way; not by day, for then Bunny is stowed away in his form, where one's eyes will never find him; not with gun and dog, for then the keen interest and quick sympathy needed to appreciate any phase of animal life gives place to the coarser excitement of the hunt; and not by going about after Bunny, for your heavy footsteps and the rustle of leaves will only send him scurrying away into safer solitudes. Find where he loves to meet with his fellows, in quiet little openings in the woods. Go there by moonlight and, sitting still in the shadow, let your game find you, or pass by without suspicion. This is the best way to hunt, whether one is after game or only a better knowledge of the ways of bird and beast.





The best spot I ever found for watching Bunny's ways was on the shore of a lonely lake in the heart of a New Brunswick forest. A score of rabbits (or rather hares) lived there who had never seen a man before, and were as curious about me as a blue jay. No dog's voice had ever wakened the echoes within fifty miles; but every sound of the wilderness they seemed to know a thousand times better than I. The snapping of the smallest stick under the stealthy tread of fox or wildcat would send them scurrying out of sight in wild alarm; yet I watched a dozen of them at play, one night, when a frightened moose went crashing through the underbrush and plunged into the lake near by, and they did not seem to mind it in the least.

The spot referred to was the only camping ground on the lake,—so Simmo, my Indian guide, assured me; and he knew very well. I discovered afterward that it was the only cleared bit of land for miles around; and this the rabbits knew very well. Right in the midst of their best playground I

pitched my tent, while Simmo built his
commoosie near by, in another little opening.

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We were tired that night, after a long day's paddle in the sunshine on the river. The after-supper chat before the camp fire was short and sleepy; and we left the lonely woods to the bats and owls and creeping things, and turned in for the night.

Br'er Rabbit



I was just asleep when I was startled by a loud thump twice repeated, just like the thump a bear gives an old log with his paw, to see if it is hollow and contains any insects. I was wide awake in a moment, sitting up straight to listen. A few minutes passed by in intense stillness; then, *thump! thump! thump!* just outside the tent among the ferns.

I crept slowly out; but, beyond a slight rustle as my head appeared outside the tent, I heard nothing, though I waited several minutes and searched about among the underbrush. But no sooner was I back in the tent and quiet than there it was again, and repeated three or four times, now here, now there, within the next ten minutes. I

crept out again, with no better success than before.

Br'er Rabbit



This time, however, I would find out about that mysterious noise before going back. It is hardly pleasant to go to sleep until one knows what things are prowling about, especially things that make a noise like that. A new moon was shining down into the little clearing, giving hardly enough light to make out the outlines of the great evergreens. Down among the ferns things were all black and uniform. For ten minutes I stood there, in the shadow of a big spruce, and waited. Then the silence was broken by a sudden heavy thump in the bushes just behind me. I was startled, and wheeled on the instant; as I did so, some small animal scurried away into the underbrush.

For a moment I was puzzled. Then it flashed upon me that I was camped upon the rabbits' playground. With the thought came a strong suspicion that Bunny was fooling me.

Going back to the fire, I raked the coals together and threw on some fuel. Next I



fastened a large piece of birch bark on two split sticks behind the fireplace; then I sat down on an old log to wait. The rude reflector did very well as the fire burned up. Out in front, the fern tops were dimly lighted to the edge of the clearing. As I watched, a dark form shot suddenly above the ferns and dropped back again. Three heavy thumps followed; then the form shot up and down once more. This time there was no mistake. In the firelight I saw plainly the dangle of Br'er Rabbit's long legs, and the flap of his big ears, and the quick flash of his dark eyes in the reflected light.

I sat there nearly an hour before the why and the how of the little joker's actions became quite clear. This is what happens in such a case. Bunny comes down from the ridge for his nightly frolic in the little clearing. While still in the ferns, the big white object standing motionless in the middle of his playground catches his attention; and very much surprised, and very much frightened, but still very curious, he



crouches down close to wait and listen. But the strange thing does not move nor see him. To get a better view he leaps up high above the ferns two or three times. Still the big thing remains quite still and harmless. "Now," thinks Bunny, "I'll frighten him, and find out what he is." Whereupon he strikes the ground sharply two or three times with his padded hind foot; then jumps above the ferns quickly to see the effect of his scare. Once he succeeded very well, when he crept up close behind me, so close that he did not have to spring up to see the effect. I fancy him chuckling to himself as he scurried off after my sudden start.

That was the first time that I ever heard Bunny's challenge. It impressed me at the time as one of his most curious pranks; the sound was so big and heavy for such a little fellow. Since then I have heard it frequently; and now, sometimes, when I stand at night in the forest and hear a sudden heavy thump in the underbrush, as if a big moose were striking the ground and shaking his antlers at me, it does not startle me in



the least. It is only Br'er Rabbit trying to
frighten me.

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The next night Bunny played us another trick. Before Simmo went to sleep he always took off his blue overalls and put them under his head for a pillow. That was only one of Simmo's queer ways. While he was asleep the rabbits came into his little *commoosie*, dragged the overalls out from under his head, and nibbled them full of holes, for the taste of salt that they found in them. Not content with this, they played with them all night; pulled them around the clearing, as threads here and there plainly showed; then dragged them away into the underbrush and left them.

Simmo's wrath when he at last found the precious garments was comical to behold; when he wore them, with their new polka-dot pattern, it was still more comical. That night Simmo, to avenge his overalls, set a deadfall supported by a piece of cord, which he had soaked in molasses and salt. Which meant that Bunny would nibble the cord, and bring the log down hard on his own



Br'er Rabbit

back. So I had to spring it, while Simmo slept, to save the little fellow's life and learn more about him.

On the ridge above our tent was a third tiny clearing, where some trappers had once made their winter camp. It was there that I watched the hares one moonlight night from my seat on an old log, just within the shadow. The first arrival came in with a rush. There was a sudden scurry behind me, and over the log he came with a flying leap that landed him on the smooth bit of ground in the middle; where he whirled around and around with grotesque jumps, like a kitten after its tail. Only Br'er Rabbit's tail was too short for him ever to catch it; he seemed rather to be trying to get a good look at it. Then he went off like a rocket in a headlong rush through the ferns. Before I knew what had become of him, over the log he came again in a marvelous jump, and went tearing around the clearing like a circus horse, varying his performance now by a high leap, now by two or three awkward hops on his hind



The third time around he discovered me in the midst of one of his antics. He was so surprised that he fell down. In a second he was up again, sitting very straight on his haunches just in front of me, paws crossed, ears erect, eyes shining in fear and curiosity. "Who are you?" he was saying, as plainly as ever rabbit said it. Without moving a muscle I tried to tell him, and also that he need not be afraid. Perhaps he began to understand, for he turned his head, as a dog does when you talk to him. But he was not quite satisfied. "I'll try my scare on him," he thought; and *thump! thump! thump!* sounded his padded hind foot on the soft ground. It almost made me start again, it sounded so big in the dead stillness. This last test quite convinced him that I was harmless and, after a moment's watching, away he went in some astonishing jumps into the forest.

A few minutes passed by in quiet waiting before he was back again, this time with two





or three companions. I have no doubt that he had been watching me all the time, for I heard his challenge in the brush just behind my log. The fun now began to grow lively. Around and around they went, here, there, everywhere; the woods seemed full of rabbits, they scurried around so. Every few minutes the number increased, as some new arrival came flying in and gyrated around like a brown fur pinwheel. They leaped over everything in the clearing; they leaped over each other as if playing leap-frog; they vied with each other in the high jump. Sometimes they gathered together in the middle of the open space and crept about close to the ground, in and out and round-about, like a game of fox and geese. Then they rose on their hind legs and hopped slowly about in all the dignity of a minuet. Right in the midst of the solemn affair some mischievous fellow gave a squeak and a big jump; and away they all went hurry-skurry, for all the world like a lot of boys turned loose for recess. In a minute they were back again, quiet and sedate, and solemn as



The woods seemed full of rabbits

bulldogs. Were they chasing and chastising the mischief-maker, or was it only the overflow of abundant spirits, as the top of a kettle blows off when the pressure below becomes resistless?

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Br'er Rabbit



Many of the rabbits saw me, I am sure, for they sometimes gave a high jump over my foot; and one came close up beside it, and sat up straight to look me over. Perhaps it was the first comer, for he did not try his scare again. Like most wild creatures, they have very little fear of an object that remains motionless at their first approach and challenge.

Once there was a curious performance over across the clearing. I could not see it plainly, but it looked very much like a boxing match. A queer sound, *put-a-put-a-put-a-put*, first drew my attention to it. Two rabbits were at the edge of the ferns, standing up on their hind legs, face to face, and apparently cuffing each other soundly, while they hopped slowly around and around in a circle. I could not see the blows but only the boxing attitude, and hear the sounds as



they landed on each other's ribs. The other rabbits did not seem to mind it, as they would have done had it been a fight, but stopped occasionally to watch the two, and then went on with their fun-making. Since then I have read of tame hares that did the same thing, but I have never seen it.

At another time the rabbits were gathered together in the very midst of some quiet fun, when they leaped aside suddenly and disappeared among the ferns as if by magic. The next instant a dark shadow swept across the opening, almost into my face, and wheeled out of sight among the evergreens. It was Kookooskoos, the big brown owl, coursing the woods on his nightly hunt after the very rabbits that were crouched motionless beneath him as he passed. But how did they learn, all at once, of the coming of an enemy whose march is noiseless as the sweep of a shadow? And did they all hide so well that he never suspected that they were about, or did he see the ferns wave as the last one disappeared, but was afraid to come back after seeing me? Perhaps Br'er

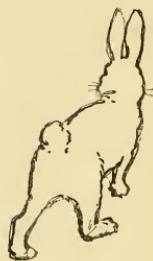
Rabbit was well repaid that time for his
confidence.

89

They soon came back again, as they would not have done had it been a natural opening. Had it been one of Nature's own sunny spots, the owl would have swept back and forth across it; for he knows the rabbits' ways as well as they know his. But hawks and owls avoid a spot like this, that men have cleared. If they cross it once in search of prey, they seldom return. Wher-ever man camps, he leaves something of himself behind; and the fierce birds and beasts of the woods fear it, and shun it. It is only the innocent things, singing birds, and fun-loving rabbits, and harmless little wood mice—shy, defenseless creatures all—that take possession of man's abandoned quarters, and enjoy his protection. Bunny knows this, I think; and so there is no other place in the woods that he loves so well as an old camping ground.

The play was soon over; for it is only in the early part of the evening, when Br'er Rabbit first comes out, after sitting still in

Br'er Rabbit





his form all day, that he gives himself up to fun, like a boy out of school. If one may judge, however, from the looks of Simmo's overalls, and from the number of times he woke me by scurrying around my tent, I suspect that he is never too serious and never too busy for a joke. It is a way he has of brightening the more sober times of getting his own living, and keeping a sharp lookout for cats and owls and prowling foxes.

Gradually the playground was deserted, as the rabbits slipped off one by one to hunt their supper. Now and then there was a scamper among the underbrush, and a high jump or two, with which some playful bunny enlivened his search for tender twigs; and at times one, more curious than the rest, came hopping along to sit erect a moment before the old log, and look to see if the strange animal were still there. But soon the old log was vacant too. Out in the swamp a disappointed owl sat on his lonely stub that lightning had blasted, and hooted that he was hungry. The moon looked down into the little clearing with its waving

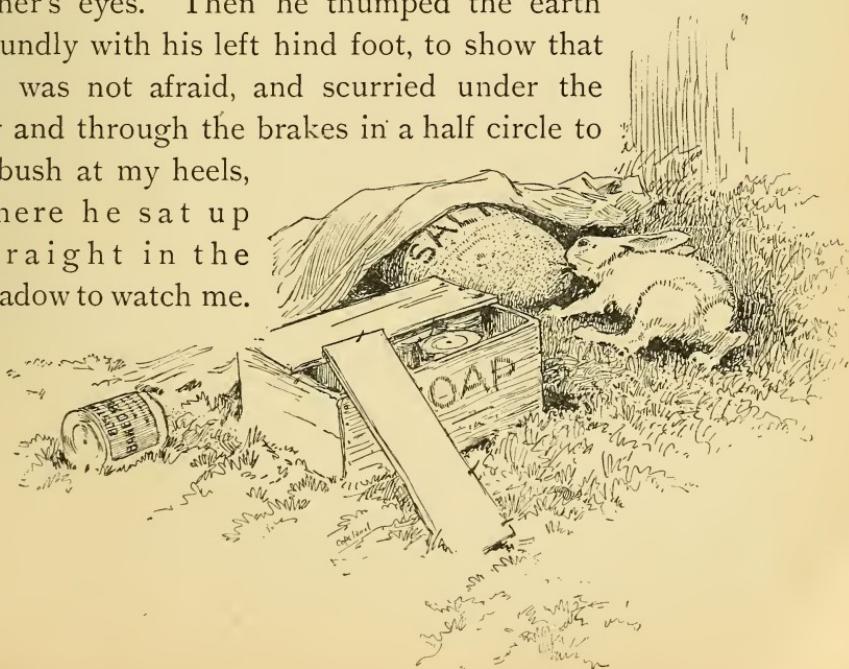
ferns and soft gray shadows, and saw nothing there to suggest that it was the rabbits' nursery.

91

Br'er Rabbit

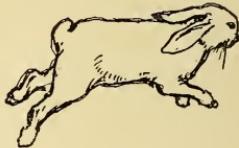


Down at the camp a new surprise was awaiting me. Br'er Rabbit was under the tent fly, tugging away at the salt bag, which I had left there carelessly after curing a bearskin. While he was absorbed in getting it out from under the rubber blanket, I crept up on hands and knees, and stroked him once from ears to tail. He jumped straight up with a startled squeak, whirled in the air, and came down facing me. So we remained for a full moment, our faces scarcely two feet apart, looking into each other's eyes. Then he thumped the earth soundly with his left hind foot, to show that he was not afraid, and scurried under the fly and through the brakes in a half circle to a bush at my heels, where he sat up straight in the shadow to watch me.



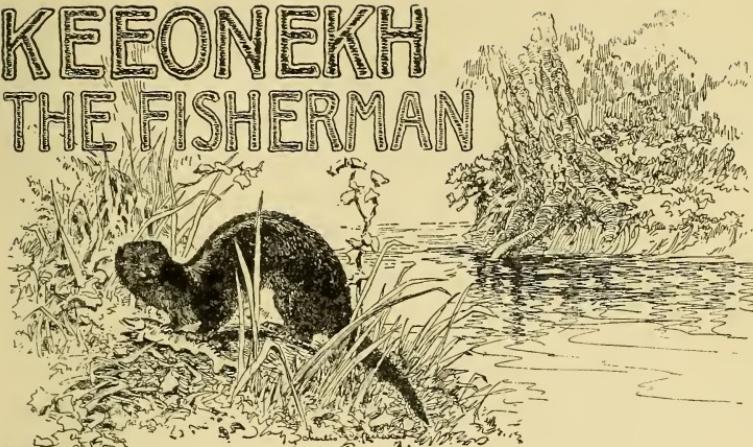
Br'er Rabbit

But I had seen enough for one night. I left a generous pinch of salt where he could find it easily, and crept in to sleep, leaving him to his own ample devices.





KEEONEKH THE FISHERMAN



WHEREVER you find Keeonekh the otter you find three other things: wildness, beauty, and running water that no winter can freeze. There is also good fishing, but that will profit you little; for after Keeonekh has harried a pool it is useless to cast your fly or minnow there. The largest fish has disappeared — you will find his bones and a fin or two on the ice or the nearest bank — and the little fish are still in hiding after their fright.

Conversely, wherever you find the three elements mentioned you will also find Keeonekh, if your eyes know how to read the

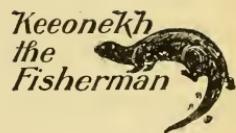


signs aright. Even in places near the towns, where no otter has been seen for generations, they are still to be found leading their shy wild life, so familiar with every sight and sound of danger that no eye of the many that pass by ever sees them. No animal has been more persistently trapped and hunted for the valuable fur that he bears; but Keeonekh is hard to catch and quick to learn. When a family have all been caught or driven away from a favorite stream, another otter speedily finds the spot in some of his winter wanderings after better fishing, and, knowing well from the signs that others of his race have paid the sad penalty for heedlessness, he settles down there with greater watchfulness, and enjoys his fisherman's luck.

In the spring he brings a mate to share his rich living. Soon a family of young otters go a-fishing in the best pools, and explore the stream for miles up and down. But so shy and wild and quick to hide are they that the trout fishermen who follow the river, and the ice fishermen who set their tilt-ups in the pond below, and the children

who gather cowslips in the spring have no suspicion that the original proprietors of the stream are still on the spot, jealously watching and resenting every intrusion.

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Occasionally the wood choppers cross an unknown trail in the snow, a heavy trail, with long, sliding, down-hill plunges which look as if a log had been dragged along. But they too go their way, wondering a bit at the queer things that live in the woods, but not understanding the plain records that the queer things leave behind them. Did they but follow far enough, they would find the end of the trail in open water, and on the ice beyond the signs of Keeonekh's fishing.

I remember one otter family whose den I found, when a boy, on a stream between two ponds within three miles of the town house. Yet the oldest hunter could barely remember the time when the last otter had been caught or seen in the county.

I was sitting very still in the bushes on the bank, one day in spring, watching for a wood duck. Wood duck lived there, but the cover was so thick that I could never



surprise them. They always heard me coming and were off, giving me only vanishing glimpses among the trees; or else they would hide among the sedges or under the tall water grass that hung over the bank, where no eye could find them, and lie low, like Br'er Rabbit, until I went by. So the only way to see them — a beautiful sight they were — was to sit still in hiding, for hours if need be, until they came gliding by, all unconscious of the watcher.

As I waited a large animal came swiftly up stream, just his head visible, with a long tail trailing behind. He was swimming powerfully, steadily, straight as a string; but, as I noted with wonder, he made no ripple whatever, sliding through the water as if greased from nose to tail. Just above me he dived, and I did not see him again, though I watched up and down stream breathlessly for him to reappear.

I had never seen such an animal before, but I knew somehow that it was an otter, and I drew back into better hiding with the hope of seeing the rare creature again.

Presently another otter appeared, coming up stream and disappearing in exactly the same way as the first. But though I stayed all the afternoon I saw nothing more.

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After that I haunted the spot every time I could get away, creeping down to the river bank and lying in hiding, hours long at a stretch; for I knew now that the otters lived there, and they gave me many glimpses of a life I had never seen before.

Soon I found their den. It was in a bank opposite my hiding place, and the entrance was among the roots of a great tree, under water, where no one could have possibly found it, if the otters had not themselves shown the way. In their approach they always dived while yet well out in the stream, and so entered their door unseen. When they came out they were quite as careful, always swimming some distance under water before coming to the surface. It was several days before my eye could trace surely the faint undulation of the water above them, and so follow their course to their doorway. Had not the water been shallow

L. of C.



I should never have found it; for they are the most wonderful of swimmers, making no disturbance on the surface, and gliding beneath the water with the faintest suggestion of a ripple to tell what is passing — like the wake of a big pickerel, coming back to his den under the bank after his frog-hunting among the lily pads.

Those were among the happiest watching hours that I have ever spent in the woods. The game was so large, so utterly unexpected; and I had the wonderful discovery all to myself. Not one of the half-dozen boys and men who occasionally, when the fever seized them, trapped muskrat in the wild meadow, a mile below, or the rare mink that hunted frogs in every brook, had any suspicion that such splendid fur was to be had for the trapping.

Sometimes a whole afternoon would go slowly by, filled with the sounds and sweet smells of the woods, and not a ripple would break the dimples of the stream before me. But when, one late afternoon, just as the pines across the stream began to darken



against the western light, a string of silver bubbles shot across the stream and a big otter rose to the surface with a pickerel in his mouth, all the watching that had not well repaid itself was swept out of the reckoning. He came swiftly towards me, put his fore paws against the bank, gave a wriggling jump,—and there he was, not twenty feet away, holding the pickerel down with his fore paws, his back arched like a frightened cat, and a tiny stream of water trickling down from the tip of his heavy, pointed tail, as he ate his fish with immense relish.

Years afterward, hundreds of miles away on the Dungarvon, in the heart of the wilderness, every detail of the scene came back to me again. I was standing on snowshoes, looking out over the frozen river, when Keeonekh appeared in an open pool with a trout in his mouth. He broke his way, with a clattering tinkle of winter bells, through the thin edge of ice, put his paws against the heavy snow ice, threw himself out with the same wriggling jump, and ate with his back arched — just as I had seen him years before.



This curious way of eating is, I think, characteristic of all otters; certainly of those that I have been fortunate enough to see. Why they do it is more than I know; but it must be uncomfortable for every mouthful — full of fish bones, too — to slide uphill to one's stomach. Perhaps it is mere habit, which shows in the arched backs of all the weasel family. Perhaps it is to frighten any enemy that may approach unawares while Keeonekh is eating, just as an owl, when feeding on the ground, bristles up all his feathers, so as to look big as possible.

But my first otter was too keen-scented to remain long so near a concealed enemy. Suddenly he stopped eating and turned his head in my direction. I could see his nostrils twitching as the wind gave him its message. Then he left his fish, glided into the stream as noiselessly as the brook entered it below him, and disappeared without leaving a single wavelet to show where he had gone down.

When the young otters appeared, there was one of the most interesting lessons to

be seen in the woods. Though Keeonekh loves the water and lives in it more than half the time, his little ones are afraid of it as so many kittens. If left to themselves they would undoubtedly go off for a hunting life, following the old family instinct; for fishing is an acquired habit of the otters, and so the fishing instinct cannot yet be transmitted to the little ones. That will take many generations. Meanwhile the little Keeonekhs must be taught to swim.

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One day the mother-otter appeared on the bank, among the roots of the great tree under which was her secret doorway. That was surprising, for up to this time both otters had always approached it from the river, and were never seen on the bank near their den. She appeared to be digging, but was immensely cautious about it, looking, listening, sniffing continually. I had never gone near the place for fear of frightening them away; and it was months afterward, when the den was deserted, before I examined it to understand just what she was doing. Then I found that she had made another doorway



from her den, leading out to the bank. She had selected the spot with wonderful cunning,—a hollow under a great root that would never be noticed,—and she dug from inside, carrying the earth down to the river bottom, so that there should be nothing about the tree to indicate the haunt of an animal.

Long afterward, when I had grown better acquainted with Keeonekh's ways from much watching, I understood the meaning of all this. She was simply making a safe way out and in for the little ones, who were afraid of the water. Had she taken or driven them out of her own entrance under the river, they might easily have drowned ere they reached the surface.

When the entrance was all ready she disappeared; but I have no doubt she was just inside, watching to be sure the coast was clear. Slowly her head and neck appeared till they showed clear of the black roots. She turned her nose up stream — nothing in the wind. Eyes and ears searched below — nothing harmful there. Then she came

out, and after her toddled two little otters, full of wonder at the big bright world, full of fear at the river.

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There was no play at first, only wonder and investigation. Caution was born in them; they put their little feet down as if treading on eggs, and they sniffed every bush before going behind it. And the old mother noted their cunning with satisfaction, while her own nose and ears watched far away.

The outing was all too short; some uneasiness was in the air down stream. Suddenly she rose from where she was lying, and the little ones, as if commanded, tumbled back into the den. In a moment she had glided after them, and the bank was deserted. It was fully ten minutes before my untrained ears caught faint sounds, which were not of the woods, coming up stream; and longer than that before two men with fish poles appeared, making their slow way to the pond above. They passed almost over the den and disappeared, all unconscious of beast or man that wished them elsewhere, resenting

*Keeonekh
the
Fisherman*

their noisy passage through the solitudes. But the otters did not come out again, though I watched till nearly dark.

It was a week before I saw them again, and some good teaching had evidently been done in the meantime; for all fear of the river was gone. They toddled out as before, at the same hour in the afternoon, and went straight to the bank. There the mother lay down, and the little ones, as if enjoying the frolic, clambered up to her back. Whereupon she slid into the stream and swam slowly about with the little Keeonekhs clinging to her desperately, as if humpty-dumpty had been played on them before, and might be repeated any moment.

I understood their air of anxious expectation a moment later, when Mother Otter dived like a flash from under them, leaving them to make their own way in the water. They began to swim naturally enough, but the fear of the new element was still upon them. The moment old Mother Otter appeared they made for her, whimpering; but she dived again and again, or moved slowly



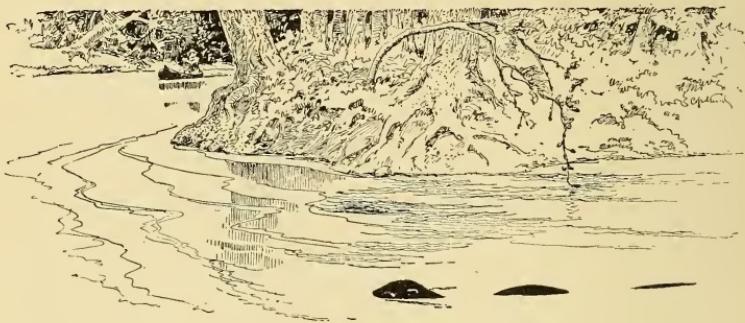
away, and so kept them swimming. After a little they seemed to tire and lose courage. Her eyes saw it quicker than mine, and she glided between them. Both little ones turned in at the same instant and found a resting place on her back. So she brought them carefully to land again, and in a few moments they were all rolling about in the dry leaves like so many puppies.

The den in the river bank was never disturbed, and the following year another litter was raised there. With characteristic cunning—a cunning which grows keener and keener in the neighborhood of civilization—the mother-otter filled up the land entrance among the roots with earth and driftweed, using only the doorway under water until it was time for the cubs to come out into the world again.

Of all the creatures of the wilderness Keeonekh is the most richly gifted, and his ways, could we but search them out, would furnish a most interesting chapter. Every journey he takes, whether by land or water, is full of unknown traits and tricks; but unfortunately



no one ever sees him doing things, and most of his ways are yet to be found out. You see a head holding swiftly across a wilderness lake, or coming to meet your canoe on the streams; then, as you follow eagerly, a



swirl and he is gone. When he comes up again he will watch you so much more keenly than you can possibly watch him that you learn little about him, except how shy he is. Even the trappers who make a business of catching him, and with whom I have often talked, know almost nothing of Keeonekh, except where to set their traps for him living and how to care for his skin when he is dead.



Once I saw him fishing in a curious way. It was winter, on a wilderness stream flowing into the Dungarvon. There had been a fall of dry snow that still lay deep and powdery over all the woods, too light to settle or crust. At every step one had to lift a shovelful of the stuff on the point of his snowshoe; and I was tired out, following some caribou that wandered like plover in the rain.

Just below me was a deep open pool surrounded by double fringes of ice. Early in the winter, while the stream was higher, the white ice had formed thickly on the river wherever the current was not too swift for freezing. Then the stream fell, and a shelf of new black ice formed at the water's level, eighteen inches or more below the first ice, some of which still clung to the banks, reaching out in places two or three feet and forming dark caverns with the ice below. Both shelves dipped towards the water, forming a gentle incline all about the edges of the open places.

A string of silver bubbles shooting across the black pool at my feet roused me out of



a drowsy weariness. There it was again, a rippling wave across the pool, which rose to the surface a moment later in a hundred bubbles, tinkling like tiny bells as they broke in the keen air. Two or three times I saw it with growing wonder. Then something stirred under the shelf of ice across the pool. An otter slid into the water; the rippling wave shot across again; the bubbles broke at the surface; and I knew that he was sitting under the white ice below me, not twenty feet away.

A whole family of otters, three or four of them, were fishing there at my feet in utter unconsciousness. Every little while the bubbles would shoot across from my side and, watching sharply, I would see Keeonekh slide out upon the lower shelf of ice, on the other side, and crouch there in the gloom, with back humped against the ice above him, eating his catch. The fish they caught were all small, evidently, for after a few minutes he would throw himself flat on the ice, slide down the incline into the water, making no splash or disturbance as he entered, and



Charles Conner

With back humped against the ice above him, eating his catch

the string of bubbles would shoot across to my side again.

III

*Keeonekh
the
Fisherman*



For a full hour I watched them breathlessly, marveling at their skill. A small fish is nimble game to follow and catch in his own element. But at every slide Keeonekh did it. Sometimes the rippling wave would shoot all over the pool, and the bubbles break in a wild tangle, as the fish darted and doubled below, with the otter after him. But it always ended the same way. Keeonekh would slide out upon the ice shelf, and hump his back, and begin to eat almost before the last bubble had tinkled behind him.

Curiously enough, the rule of the salmon fishermen prevailed here in the wilderness: no two rods shall whip the same pool at the same time. I would see an otter lying ready on the ice, evidently waiting for the chase to end. Then, as another otter slid out beside him with his fish, in he would go like a flash and take his turn. For a while the pool was a lively place; the bubbles had no rest. Then the plunges grew fewer and

fewer, and the otters all disappeared into the ice caverns.



What became of them I could not make out; and I was too chilled to watch longer. Above and below the pool the stream was frozen for a distance; then there was more open water and more fishing. Whether they followed along the bank under cover of the ice to other pools, or simply slept where they were till hungry again, I never found out. Certainly they had taken up their abode in an ideal spot, and would not leave it willingly. The open pools gave excellent fishing, and the upper ice shelf protected them perfectly from all enemies.

Once, a week later, I left the caribou and came back to the spot to watch awhile; but the place was deserted. The black water gurgled and dimpled across the pool, and slipped away silently under the lower edge of ice, undisturbed by strings of silver bubbles. The ice caverns were all dark and silent. The mink had stolen the fish heads, and there was no trace anywhere to show that it was Keeonekh's banquet hall.



The swimming power of an otter, which was so evident there in the winter pool, is one of the most remarkable things in nature. All other animals and birds, and even the best modeled of modern boats, leave more or less wake behind them when moving through the water. But Keeonekh leaves no more trail than a fish. This is partly because he keeps his body well submerged when swimming, partly because of the strong, deep, even stroke that drives him forward. Sometimes I have wondered if the outer hairs of his coat — the waterproof covering that keeps his fur dry, no matter how long he swims — are not better oiled than in other animals; which might account for the lack of ripple. I have seen him go down suddenly and leave absolutely no break in the surface to show where he was. When sliding also, plunging down a twenty-foot clay bank, he enters the water with an astonishing lack of noise or disturbance of any kind.

In swimming at the surface he seems to use all four feet, like other animals. But below the surface, when chasing fish, he



uses only the fore paws. The hind legs then stretch straight out behind and are used, with the heavy tail, for a great rudder. By this means he turns and doubles like a flash, following surely the swift dartings of frightened trout, and beating them by sheer speed and nimbleness.

When fishing a pool he always hunts outward from the center, driving the fish towards the bank, keeping himself within their circlings, and so having the immense advantage of the shorter line in heading off his game. The fish are seized as they crouch against the bank for protection, or try to dart out past him. Large fish are frequently caught from behind, as they lie resting in their spring-holes. So swift and noiseless is his approach that they are seized before they become aware of danger.

This swimming power of Keeonekh is all the more astonishing when one remembers that he is a land animal, with none of the special endowments of the seal, who is his only rival as a fisherman. Nature undoubtedly intended him to get his living, as the



other members of his large family do, by hunting in the woods, and endowed him accordingly. He is a strong runner, a good climber, a patient, tireless hunter, and his nose is keen as a brier. With a little practice he could again get his living by hunting, as his ancestors did. If squirrels and rats and rabbits were too nimble at first, there are plenty of musquash to be caught, and he need not stop at a fawn or a sheep; for he is enormously strong, and the grip of his jaws is not to be loosened.

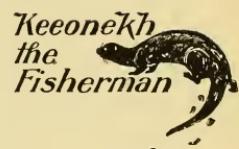
In severe winters, when fish are scarce or his pools frozen over, he takes to the woods boldly and shows himself a master at hunting craft. But he likes fish, and likes the water, and for many generations now has been simply a fisherman, with many of the quiet, lovable traits that belong to fishermen in general.

That is one thing to give you instant sympathy for Keeonekh—he is so different, so far above all other members of his tribe. He is very gentle by nature, with no trace of the fisher's ferocity or the weasel's blood-



thirstiness. He tames easily, and makes the most docile and affectionate pet of all the wood folk. He never kills for the sake of killing, but lives peaceably, so far as he can, with all creatures. And he stops fishing when he has caught his dinner. He is also most cleanly in his habits, with no suggestion whatever of the evil odors that cling to the mink and defile the whole neighborhood of a skunk. One cannot help wondering whether just going fishing has not wrought all this wonder in Keeonekh's disposition. If so, 'tis a pity that all his tribe do not turn fishermen.

His one enemy among the wood folk, so far as I have observed, is the beaver. As the latter is also a peaceable animal, it is difficult to account for the hostility. I have heard or read somewhere that Keeonekh is fond of young beaver and hunts them occasionally to vary his diet of fish; but I have never found any evidence in the wilderness to show this. Instead, I think it is simply a matter of the beaver's dam and pond that causes the trouble.



When the dam is built the beavers often dig a channel around either end to carry off the surplus water, and so prevent their handiwork being washed away in a freshet. Then the beavers guard their preserve jealously, driving away the wood folk that dare to cross their dam or enter their ponds, especially the musquash, who is apt to burrow and cause them no end of trouble. But Keeonekh, secure in his strength, holds straight through the pond, minding his own business and even taking a fish or two in the deep places near the dam. He delights also in running water, especially in winter when lakes and streams are mostly frozen, and in his journeyings he makes use of the open channels that guard the beavers' work. But the moment the beavers hear a splashing there, or note a disturbance in the pond where Keeonekh is chasing fish, down they come full of wrath. And there is generally a desperate fight before the affair is settled.

Once, on a little pond, I saw a fierce battle going on out in the middle, and paddled



hastily to find out about it. Two beavers and a big otter were locked in a death struggle, diving, plunging, throwing themselves out of water, and snapping at each other's throats.

As my canoe halted, the otter gripped one of his antagonists and went under with him. There was a terrible commotion below the surface for a few moments. When it ended the beaver rolled up dead, and Keeonekh shot up under the second beaver to repeat the attack. They gripped on the instant, but the second beaver, an enormous fellow, refused to go under, where he would be at a disadvantage. In my eagerness I let the canoe drift almost upon them, driving them wildly apart before the common danger. The otter held on his way up the lake; the beaver turned towards the shore, where I noticed for the first time a couple of beaver houses.

In this case there was no chance for intrusion on Keeonekh's part. He had probably been attacked when going peaceably about his business through the lake.

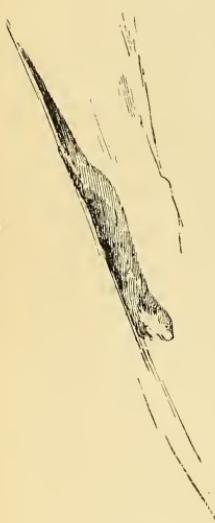


It is barely possible, however, that there was an old grievance on the beavers' part, which they sought to square when they caught Keeonekh on the lake. When beavers build their houses on the lake shore, without the necessity for making a dam, they generally build a tunnel slanting up from the lake's bed to their den or house on the bank. Now Keeonekh fishes under the ice in winter more than is generally supposed. As he must breathe after every chase, he must needs know all the air-holes and dens in the whole lake. No matter how much he turns and doubles in the chase after a trout, he never loses his sense of direction, never forgets where the breathing places are. When his fish is seized he makes a bee line under the ice for the nearest place where he can breathe and eat. Sometimes this lands him, out of breath, in the beaver's tunnel; and the beaver must sit upstairs in his own house, nursing his wrath, while Keeonekh eats fish in his hallway; for there is not room for both at once in the tunnel, and a fight there or under the ice is out of



*Keeonekh
the
Fisherman*

the question. As the beaver eats only bark — the white inner layer of "popple" bark is his chief dainty — he cannot understand and cannot tolerate this barbarian, who eats raw fish, and leaves the bones and fins and the smell of slime in his doorway. The beaver is exemplary in his neatness, detesting all smells and filth; and this may possibly account for some of his enmity and his savage attacks upon Keeonekh when he catches him in a good place.



Not the least interesting of Keeonekh's queer ways is his habit of sliding down hill, which makes a bond of sympathy and brings him close to the boyhood memories of those who know him.

I remember one pair of otters that I watched, for the better part of a sunny afternoon, sliding down a clay bank with endless delight. The slide had been made, with much care evidently, on the steep side of a little promontory that jutted into the river. It was very steep, about twenty feet high, and had been made perfectly smooth by





much sliding and wetting-down. An otter would appear at the top of the bank, throw himself forward on his belly and shoot downward like a flash, diving deep under water and reappearing some distance out from the foot of the slide. And all this with marvelous stillness, as if the very woods had ears and were listening to betray the shy creatures at their fun. For it was fun, pure and simple, and fun with no end of tingle and excitement in it, especially when one tried to catch the other and shot into the water at his very heels.

This slide was in perfect condition, and the otters were careful not to roughen it. They never scrambled up over it, but went round the point and climbed from the other side; or else went up parallel to the slide, some distance away, where the ascent was easier and where there was no danger of rolling stones or sticks upon the coasting ground to spoil its smoothness.

In winter the snow makes better coasting than the clay. Moreover it soon grows hard and icy from the freezing of the water left



by the otter's body, and after a few days the slide is as smooth as glass. Then coasting is perfect, and every otter, old and young, has his favorite slide and spends part of every pleasant day enjoying the fun.

When traveling through the woods in deep snow, Keeonekh makes use of his sliding habit to help him along, especially on down grades. He runs a little way and throws himself forward on his belly, sliding through the snow for several feet before he runs again. So his progress is a series of slides, much as one hurries along in slippery weather.

I have spoken of the silver bubbles that first drew my attention to the fishing otters, one day in the wilderness. From the few rare opportunities that I have had to watch them, I think that the bubbles are seen only after Keeonekh slides swiftly into the stream. The air clings to the hairs of his rough outer coat and is brushed from them as he passes through the water. One who watches him thus, shooting down the long slide belly-bump into the black winter pool, with a string of silver bubbles breaking and

tinkling above him, is apt to know the hunter's change of heart from the touch of Nature which makes us all kin. Thereafter he eschews trapping — at least you will not find his number-three trap at the foot of Keeonekh's slide any more, to turn the shy creature's happiness into tragedy — and he sends a hearty good-luck after his fellow-fisherman, whether he meet him on the wilderness lakes or in the quiet places on the home streams, where nobody ever comes.



Mooween the Bear



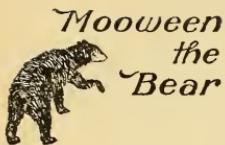
MOOWEEN THE BEAR



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VER since nursery times Bruin has been largely a creature of imagination. He dwells there, a ferocious beast, prowling about gloomy woods, red eyed and dangerous, ready to rush upon the unwary traveler and eat him on the spot.

But Mooween the Bear, as the northern Indians call him, is a very different kind of creature. He is big and glossy black, with long white teeth and



sharp black claws, like the imagination bear. Unlike him, however, he is shy and wild, and timid as any rabbit. When you camp in the wilderness at night, the rabbit will come out of his form in the ferns to pull at your shoe, or nibble a hole in the salt bag, while you sleep. He will play twenty pranks under your very eyes. But if you would see Mooween, you must camp many summers, and tramp many a weary mile through the big forests before catching a glimpse of him, or seeing any trace save the deep tracks, like a barefoot boy's, left in some soft bit of earth in his hurried flight.

Mooween's ears are quick, and his nose very keen. The slightest warning from either will generally send him off to the densest cover or the roughest hillside in the neighborhood. Silently as a black shadow he glides away, if he has detected your approach from a distance. But if surprised and frightened, he dashes headlong through the brush, with crash of branches and bump of fallen logs, and volleys of dirt and dead wood flung out behind him as he digs his

toes into the hillside in his frantic haste to be away.

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In the first startled instant of such an encounter, one thinks there must be twenty bears scrambling up the hill. And if you should perchance get a glimpse of the game, you will be conscious chiefly of a funny little pair of wrinkled black feet, turned up at you so rapidly that they actually seem to twinkle through a cloud of flying loose stuff.

That was the way in which I first met Mooween. He was feeding peaceably on blueberries, when I came round the turn of a deer path. There he was, the mighty, ferocious beast—and my only weapon a trout-rod!

We discovered each other at the same instant. Words can hardly measure the mutual consternation. I felt scared; and in a moment it flashed upon me that he looked so. This last observation was like a breath of inspiration. It led me to make a demonstration before he should regain his wits. I jumped forward with a flourish, and threw my hat at him.—

*Mooween
the
Bear*



Boo! said I.

Hoof, woof! said Mooween. And away

he went up the hill in a desperate scramble, with loose stones rattling, and the bottoms of his feet showing constantly through the volley of dirt and chips flung out behind him.

That killed the fierce imagination bear of childhood days deader than any bullet could have done, and convinced me that Mooween is at heart a timid creature. Still, this was a young bear, as was also one other upon whom I tried the same experiment with the same result. Had he been older and bigger, it might have been different. In that case I have found that a good rule is to go your own way unobtrusively, leaving Mooween to his devices. All animals, whether wild or domestic, respect a man who neither fears nor disturbs them.

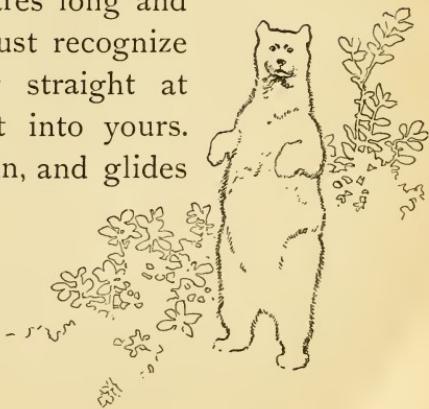
Mooween's eyes are his weak point. They are close together, and seem to focus on the ground a few feet in front of his nose. At twenty yards to leeward he can never tell you from a stump or a caribou, should you chance to be standing still.



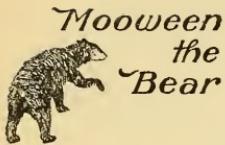
*Mooween
the
Bear*

If fortunate enough to find the ridge where he sleeps away the long summer days, one is almost sure to get a glimpse of him by watching on the lake below. It is necessary only to sit perfectly still in your canoe among the water grasses. When near a lake, a bear will almost invariably come down about noon time to sniff carefully all about, and lap the water, and perhaps find a dead fish before going back for his afternoon sleep.

Four or five times I have sat thus in my canoe, while Mooween passed close by and never suspected my presence till a chirp drew his attention. It is curious at such times, when there is no wind to bring the scent to his keen nose, to see him turn his head to one side, and wrinkle his forehead in the vain endeavor to make out the curious object there in the grass. At last he rises on his hind legs, and stares long and intently. It seems as if he must recognize you, with his nose pointing straight at you, his eyes looking straight into yours. But he drops on all fours again, and glides



silently into the thick bushes that fringe the shore.



Don't stir now, nor make the least sound. He is in there, just out of sight, sitting on his haunches, using nose and ears to catch your slightest message.

Ten minutes pass by in intense silence. Down on the shore, fifty yards below, a slight swaying of the bilberry bushes catches your eye. That surely is not the bear! There has not been a sound since he disappeared. A squirrel could hardly creep through that underbrush without noise enough to tell where he was. But the bushes sway again, and Mooween reappears suddenly for another long look at the suspicious object. Then he turns and plods his way along shore, rolling his head from side to side as if completely mystified.

Now swing your canoe well out into the lake, and head him off on the point, a quarter of a mile below. Hold the canoe quiet, just outside the lily pads, by grasping a few tough stems, and sit low. This time the big object catches Mooween's eye as he rounds the

point; and you have only to sit still to see him go through the same maneuvers with greater mystification than before.

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Mooween

*the
Bear*

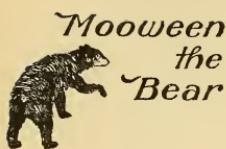


Once, however, he varied his program, and gave me a terrible start, letting me know for a moment just how it feels to be hunted, at the same time showing with what marvelous stillness he can glide through the thickest cover when he chooses.

It was early evening on a forest lake. The water lay like a great mirror, with the sunset splendor still upon it. The hush of twilight was over the wilderness. Only the hermit thrushes sang wild and sweet from a hundred dead spruce tops.

I was drifting about, partly in the hope to meet Mooween, whose tracks were very numerous at the lower end of the lake, when I heard him walking in the shallow water. Through the glass I made him out against the shore, as he plodded along in my direction.

I had long been curious to know how near a bear would come to a man without discovering him. Here was an opportunity.



The wind at sunset had been in my favor; now there was not the faintest breath stirring.

Hiding the canoe, I sat down in the sand on a little point, where dense bushes grew down to within a few feet of the water's edge. Head and shoulders were in plain sight above the water grass. My intentions were wholly peaceable, notwithstanding the rifle that lay across my knees. It was near the mating season, when Mooween's temper is often dangerous; and one felt much more comfortable with the chill of the cold iron in his hands.

Mooween came rapidly along the shore meanwhile, evidently anxious to reach the other end of the lake. In the mating season bears use the margins of lakes and streams as natural highways. As he drew nearer and nearer I gazed with a kind of fascination at the big unconscious brute. He carried his head low, and dropped his feet with a heavy splash into the shallow water.

At twenty yards he stopped, as if struck, with head up and one paw lifted, sniffing

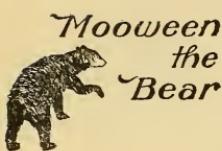


suspiciously. Even then he did not see me, though only the open shore lay between us. He did not use his eyes at all, but laid his great head back on his shoulders and sniffed in every direction, rocking his brown muzzle up and down the while, so as to take in every atom from the tainted air.

A few slow careful steps forward, and he stopped again, looked straight into my eyes, then beyond me toward the lake, all the while sniffing. I was still only part of the shore. Yet he was so near that I caught the gleam of his eyes, and saw the nostrils swell and the muzzle twitch nervously.

Another step or two, and he planted his fore feet firmly. The long hairs began to rise along his spine, and under his wrinkled chops was a flash of white teeth. Still he had no suspicion of the motionless object there in the grass. He looked rather out on the lake. Then he glided into the brush and was lost to sight and hearing.

He was so close that I scarcely dared breathe as I waited, expecting him to come out farther down the shore. Five minutes



passed without the slightest sound to indicate his whereabouts, though I was listening intently in the dead hush that was on the lake. All the while I smelled him strongly. One can smell a bear almost as far as he can a deer; though the scent does not cling so long to the underbrush.

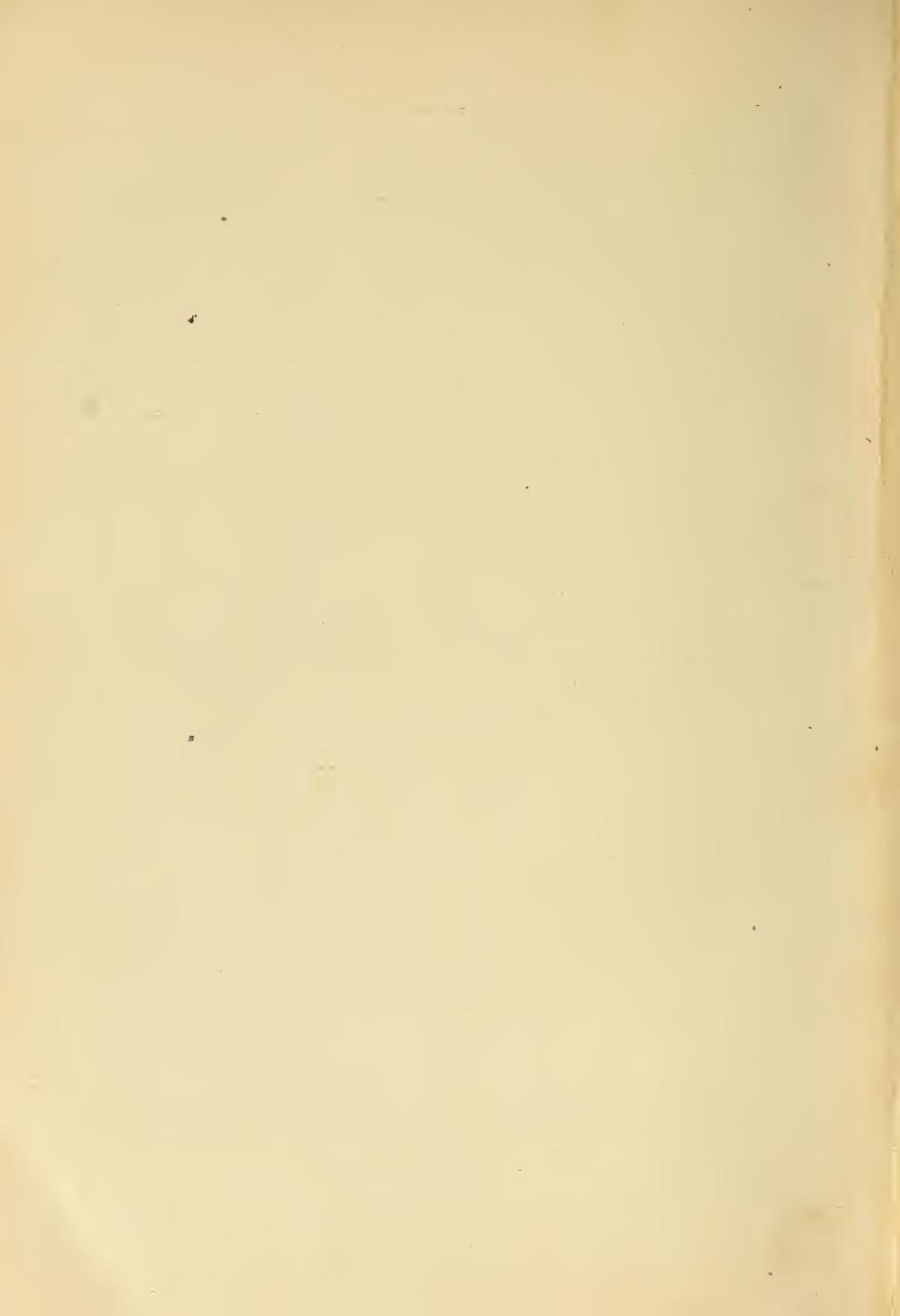
A bush swayed slightly, below where he had disappeared. I was watching it closely when some sudden warning—I know not what, for I did not hear but only felt it—made me turn my head quickly. There, not six feet away, a huge head and shoulders were thrust out of the bushes on the bank, and a pair of gleaming eyes were peering intently down upon me in the grass. He had been watching me, at arm's length, probably two or three minutes. Had a muscle moved in all that time, I have no doubt that he would have sprung upon me. As it was, who can say what was passing behind that curious, half-puzzled, half-savage gleam in his eyes?

He drew quickly back as a sudden movement on my part threw the rifle into position.



A huge head and shoulders were thrust out of the bushes

Charles Copeland Knobell 1899



A few minutes later I heard the snap of a twig, some distance away. Not another sound told of his presence till he broke out onto the shore, fifty yards above, and went steadily on his way up the lake.

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the
Bear*



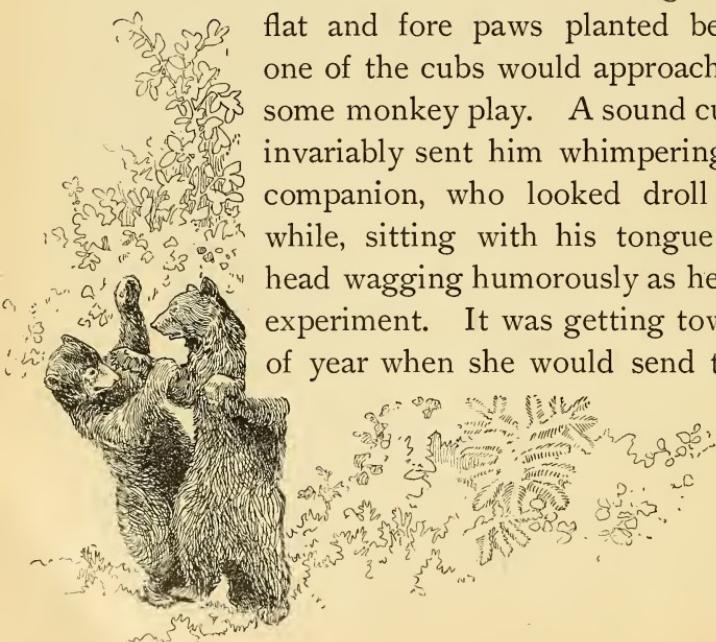
Mooween is something of a humorist in his own way. When not hungry he will go out of his way to frighten a bullfrog from his sun-bath on the shore, for no other purpose, evidently, than just to see him jump. Watching him thus amusing himself, one afternoon, I was immensely entertained by seeing him turn his head to one side, and wrinkle his eyebrows, as each successive frog said *ke' dunk!* and went splashing away over the lily pads.

A pair of cubs are playful as young foxes, while their extreme awkwardness makes them a dozen times more comical. Simmo, my Indian guide, tells me that the cubs will sometimes run away and hide when they hear the mother bear returning. No amount of coaxing or of anxious fear on her part will bring them back, till she searches diligently to find them.



Once only have I had opportunity to see the young at play. There were two of them, nearly full-grown, with the mother. The most curious thing was to see them stand up on their hind legs and cuff each other soundly, striking and warding like trained boxers. Then they would lock arms and wrestle desperately till one was thrown, when the other promptly seized him by throat or paw, and pretended to growl frightfully.

They were well fed, evidently, and full of good spirits as two boys. But the mother was cross and out of sorts. She kept moving about uneasily, as if the rough play irritated her nerves. Occasionally, as she sat for a moment with hind legs stretched out flat and fore paws planted between them, one of the cubs would approach and attempt some monkey play. A sound cuff on the ear invariably sent him whimpering back to his companion, who looked droll enough the while, sitting with his tongue out and his head wagging humorously as he watched the experiment. It was getting toward the time of year when she would send them off into



the world to shift for themselves. And this was perhaps their first hard discipline.

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Once also I caught an old bear enjoying himself in a curious way. It was one intensely hot day, in the heart of a New Brunswick wilderness. Mooween came out upon the lake shore and lumbered along, twisting uneasily and rolling his head, as if distressed by the heat. I followed silently, close behind, in my canoe.

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Bear*



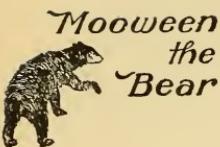
Soon he came to a cool spot under the alders; which was probably what he was looking for. A small brook made an eddy there, and a lot of driftweed had collected over a bed of soft black mud. The stump of a huge cedar leaned out over it, some four or five feet above the water.

First he waded in to try the temperature. Then he came out and climbed the cedar stump, where he sniffed in every direction, as is his wont before lying down. Satisfied at last, he balanced himself carefully and gave a big jump, with legs out flat, and paws up, and mouth open as if he were laughing at himself. Down he came, *souse!* with a

tremendous splash that sent mud and water flying in every direction. And with a deep *uff-guff!* of pure delight, he settled himself in his cool bed for a comfortable nap.

In his fondness for fish, Mooween has discovered an interesting way of catching them. In June and July immense numbers of trout and salmon run up the wilderness rivers on their way to the spawning grounds. Here and there, on small streams, are shallow riffles, where large fish are often half out of water as they struggle up. On one of these riffles Mooween stations himself during the first bright moonlight nights of June, when the run of fish is largest, on account of the higher tides at the river mouth. And Mooween knows, as well as any other fisherman, the kind of night on which to go a-fishing. He knows also the virtue of keeping still. As a big salmon struggles by, Mooween slips a paw under him, tosses him to the shore by a dexterous flip, and springs after him before he can flounder back.

When hungry, Mooween has as many devices as a fox for getting a meal. He

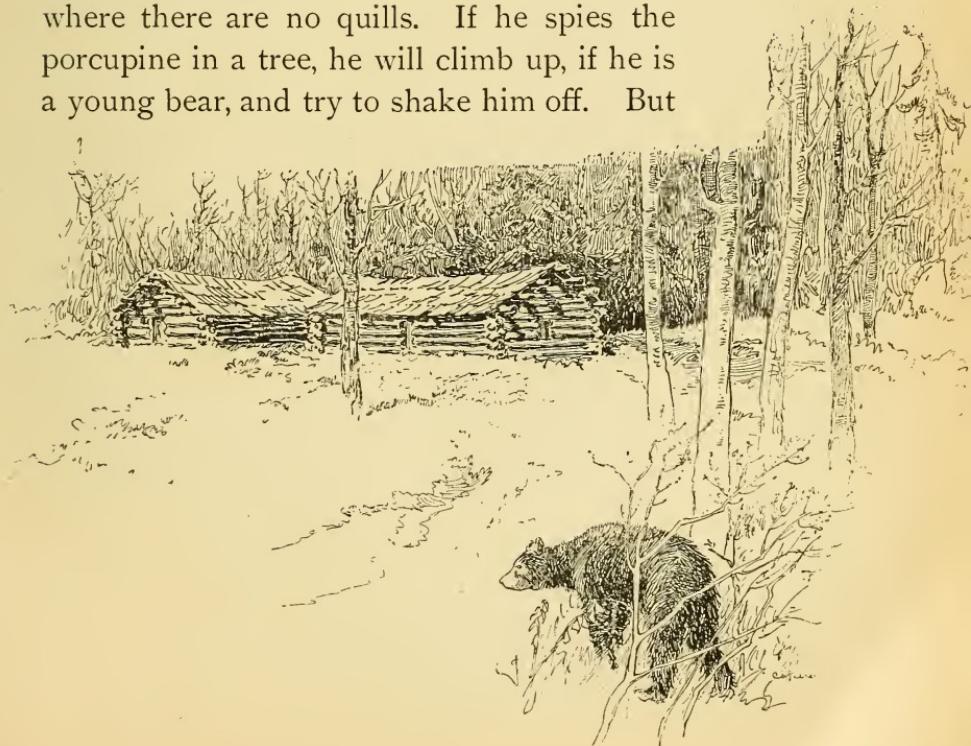


Mooween the Bear

*Mooween
the
Bear*

tries flipping frogs from among the lily pads in the same way that he catches salmon. That failing, he takes to creeping through the water grass, like a mink, and striking his game dead with a blow of his paw.

Or he finds a porcupine loafing through the woods, and follows him about to flip dirt and stones at him, carefully refraining from touching him the while, till the porcupine rolls himself into a ball of bristling quills,—his usual method of defense. Mooween slips a paw under him, flips him against a tree to stun him, and bites him in the belly, where there are no quills. If he spies the porcupine in a tree, he will climb up, if he is a young bear, and try to shake him off. But



he soon learns better, and saves his strength for more fruitful exertions.



*Mooween
the
Bear*

Mooween goes to the lumber camps regularly after his winter sleep and, breaking in through door or roof, helps himself to what he finds. If there happens to be a barrel of pork there, he will roll it into the open air before breaking in the head with a blow of his paw.

Should he find a barrel of molasses among the stores, his joy is unbounded. The head is broken in on the instant and Mooween eats till he is surfeited. Then he lies down and rolls in the sticky sweet, to prolong the pleasure; and stays in the neighborhood till every drop has been lapped up.

Lumbermen have long since learned of his strength and cunning in breaking into their strong camps. When valuable stores are left in the woods, they are put into special camps, called bear camps, where doors and roofs are fastened with chains and ingenious log locks to keep Mooween out.

Near the settlements Mooween speedily locates the sweet apple trees among the



orchards. These he climbs by night, and shakes off enough apples to last him for several visits. Every kind of domestic animal is game for him. He will lie at the edge of a clearing for hours, with the patience of a cat, waiting for turkey or sheep or pig to come within range of his swift rush.

His fondness for honey is well known. When he has discovered a rotten tree in which wild bees have hidden their store, he will claw at the bottom till it falls. Curling one paw under the log he sinks the claws deep into the wood. The other paw grips the log opposite the first, and a single wrench lays it open. The clouds of angry insects about his head, meanwhile, are as little regarded as so many flies. He knows the thickness of his skin, and they know it. When the honey is at last exposed, and begins to disappear in great hungry mouthfuls, the bees also fall upon it, to gorge themselves with the fruit of their hard labor before Mooween shall have eaten it all.

Everything eatable in the woods ministers at times to Mooween's need. Nuts and





berries are favorite dishes in their season. When these and other delicacies fail, he knows where to dig for edible roots. A big caribou, wandering near his hiding place, is pulled down and stunned by a blow on the head. Then, when the meat has lost its freshness, he will hunt for an hour after a wood mouse he has seen run under a stone, or pull a rotten log to pieces for the ants and larvæ concealed within.

These last are favorite dishes with him. In a burned district, where ants and berries abound, one is continually finding charred logs, in which the ants nest by thousands, split open from end to end. A few strong claw marks, and the lick of a moist tongue here and there, explain the matter. It shows the extremes of Mooween's taste. Next to honey he prefers red ants, which are sour as pickles.

Mooween is even more expert as a boxer than as a fisherman. When the skin is stripped from his fore arms, they are seen to be of great size, with muscles as firm to the touch as so much rubber. Long practice



has made him immensely strong, and quick as a flash to ward and strike. Woe be to the luckless dog, however large, that ventures in the excitement of the hunt within reach of his paw. A single stroke will generally put the poor brute out of the hunt forever.

Once Simmo caught a bear by the hind leg in a steel trap. It was a young bear, a two-year-old; and Simmo thought to save his precious powder by killing it with a club. He cut a heavy maple stick and, swinging it high above his head, advanced to the trap. Mooween rose to his hind legs, and looked him steadily in the eye, like the trained boxer that he is. Down came the club with a sweep to have felled an ox. There was a flash from Mooween's paw; the club spun away into the woods; and Simmo just escaped a fearful return blow by dropping to the ground and rolling out of reach, leaving his cap in Mooween's claws. A wink later, and his scalp would have hung there instead.

In the mating season, when three or four bears often roam the woods together in



fighting humor, Mooween uses a curious kind of challenge. Rising on his hind legs against a big fir or spruce, he tears the bark with his claws as high as he can reach on either side. Then, placing his back against the trunk, he turns his head and bites into the tree with his long canine teeth, tearing out a mouthful of the wood. That is to let all rivals know just how big a bear he is.

The next bear that comes along on the trail, seeking perhaps to win the mate of his rival, sees the challenge and measures his height and reach in the same way, against the same tree. If he can bite and reach as high, or higher, he keeps on, and a terrible fight is sure to follow. But if, with his best endeavors, his marks fall short of the deep scars above, he prudently withdraws, and leaves it to a bigger bear to risk an encounter.

In the wilderness one occasionally finds a tree on which three or four bears have thus left their challenge. Sometimes all the bears in a neighborhood seem to have left their records in the same place. I remember

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well one such tree, a big fir, by a lonely little beaver pond, where the separate challenges had become indistinguishable on the torn bark. The freshest marks here were those of a long-limbed old ranger — a monster he must have been — with a clear reach of a foot above his nearest rival. Evidently no other bear had cared to try after such a record.

Once, in the same season, I discovered quite by accident that Mooween can be called, like a hawk or a moose, or indeed any other wild creature, if one but knows how. It was in New Brunswick, where I was camped on a wild forest river. At midnight I was back at a little opening in the woods, watching some hares at play in the bright moonlight. When they had run away, I called a wood mouse from his den under a stump; and then a big brown owl from across the river — which almost scared the life out of my poor little wood mouse. Suddenly a strange cry sounded far back on the mountain. I listened curiously, then imitated the cry, in the hope of hearing it

again and of remembering it; for I had never before heard the sound, and had no idea what creature produced it. There was no response, however, and I speedily grew interested in the owls; for by this time two or three more were hooting about me, all called in by the first comer. When they had gone I tried the strange call again. Instantly it was answered close at hand. The creature was coming.



I stole out into the middle of the opening, and sat very still on a fallen log. Ten minutes passed in intense silence. Then a twig snapped behind me. I turned—and there was Mooween, just coming into the opening. I shall not soon forget how he looked, standing there big and black in the moonlight; nor the growl deep down in his throat, that grew deeper as he watched me. We looked straight into each other's eyes a brief, uncertain moment. Then he drew back silently into the dense shadow.

There is another side to Mooween's character, fortunately a rare one, which is sometimes evident in the mating season, when his

*Mooween
the
Bear*

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temper leads him to attack instead of running away, as usual; or when wounded, or cornered, or roused to frenzy in defense of the young. Mooween is then a beast to be dreaded, a great savage brute, possessed of enormous strength and of a fiend's cunning. I have followed him wounded through the wilderness, when his every resting place was scarred with deep gashes, and where broken saplings testified mutely to the force of his blow. Yet even here his natural timidity lies close to the surface, and his ferocity has been greatly exaggerated by hunters.

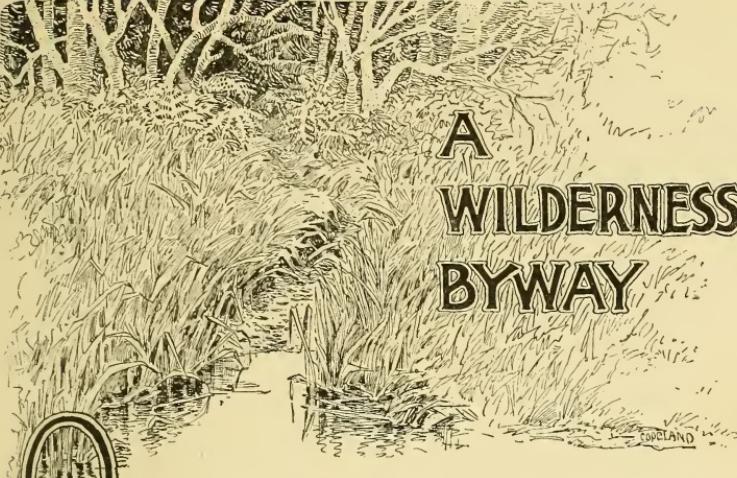
Altogether, Mooween the bear is a peaceable fellow, and an interesting one, well worth studying. His extreme wariness, however, generally enables him to escape observation; and there are undoubtedly many of his queer ways yet to be discovered by some one who, instead of scaring the life out of him by a shout or a rifle-shot, in the rare moments when he shows himself, will have the patience to creep near and find out just what he is doing. Only in the deepest wilderness is he natural and unconscious.



There he roams about, entirely alone for the most part, supplying his numerous wants, and performing droll capers with all the gravity of an owl, when he thinks that not even Tookhees the wood mouse is looking.



A
WILDER-
NESS
BYWAY



A WILDERNESS BYWAY

NE day in the wilderness, as my canoe was sweeping down a beautiful stretch of river, I noticed a little path leading through the water grass, at right angles to the stream's course. Swinging my canoe up to it, I found what seemed to be a landing place for the wood folk on their river journeys. The sedges, which stood thickly all about, were here bent inward, making a shiny green channel from the river.

On the muddy shore were many tracks of mink and muskrat and otter. Here a big moose had stood drinking; and there a



beaver had cut the grass and made a little mud pie, in the middle of which was a bit of musk scenting the whole neighborhood. It was done last night, for the marks of his fore paws still showed plainly where he had patted his pie smooth ere he went away.

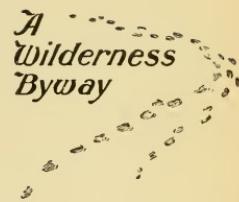
But the spot was more than a landing place; a path went up the bank into the woods, as faint as the green waterway among the sedges. Tall ferns bent over to hide it; rank grasses that had been softly brushed aside tried their best to look natural; the alders waved their branches thickly, saying: "There is no way here." But there it was, a path for the wood folk. And when I followed it into the shade and silence of the woods, the first mossy log that lay across it was worn smooth by the passage of many little feet.

As I came back, Simmo's canoe glided into sight and I waved him to shore. The light birch swung up beside mine, a deep water-dimple just under the curl of its bow, and a musical ripple like the gurgle of water by a mossy stone — that was the only sound.

"What means this path, Simmo?"

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His keen eyes took in everything at a glance, the wavy waterway, the tracks, the faint path to the alders. There was a look of surprise in his face that I had blundered upon a discovery which he had looked for many times in vain, his traps on his back.



"Das a portash," he said simply.

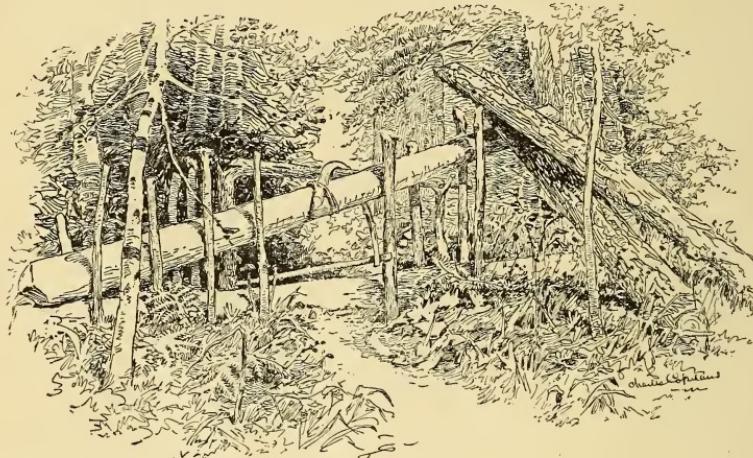
"A portage! But who made a portage here?"

"Well, Musquash he prob'lly make-um first. Den beaver, den h'otter, den everybody in hurry he make-um. You see, river make big bend here. Portash go 'cross; save time, jus' same Indian portash."

That was the first of a dozen such paths that I have since found cutting across the bends of wilderness rivers,—the wood folk's way of saving time on a journey. I left Simmo to go on down the river, while I followed the little byway curiously. There is nothing more fascinating in the woods than to go on the track of the wild things and see what they have been doing.



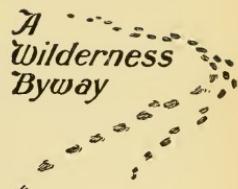
But alas! mine were not the first human feet that had taken the journey. Halfway across, at a point where the path ran over a little brook, I found a deadfall set squarely in the way of unwary feet. It was different from any I had ever seen, and was made like this:



That tiny stick (trigger, the trappers call it) with its end resting in air three inches above the bed log — just the right height so that a beaver or an otter would naturally put his foot on it in crossing — looks innocent enough. But if you look sharply you will

see that if it were pressed down ever so little it would instantly release the bent stick that holds the fall-log, and bring the deadly thing down with crushing force across the back of any animal beneath.

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Such are the pitfalls that lie athwart the way of Keeonekh the otter, when he goes a-courting and uses Musquash's portage to shorten his journey.

At the other end of the portage I waited for Simmo to come round the bend, and took him back to see the work, denouncing the heartless carelessness of the trapper who had gone away in the spring and left an unsprung deadfall as a menace to the wild things. At the first glance he pronounced it an otter trap. Then the fear and wonder swept into his face, and the questions into mine.

"Das Noel Waby's trap. Nobody else make-um tukpeel stick like dat," he said at last.

Then I understood. Noel Waby had gone up river trapping in the spring, and had never come back; nor any word to tell how death met him.



I stooped down to examine the trap with greater interest. On the underside of the fall-log I found some long hairs still clinging in the crevices of the rough bark. They belonged to the outer, waterproof coat with which Keeonekh keeps his fur dry. One otter at least had been caught here, and the trap reset. But some sense of danger, some old scent of blood or subtle warning clung to the spot, and no other creature had crossed the bed log, though hundreds must have passed that way since the old Indian reset his trap, and strode away with the dead otter across his shoulders.

What was it in the air? What sense of fear brooded here and whispered in the alder leaves and tinkled in the brook? Simmo grew uneasy and hurried away. He was like the wood folk. But I sat down on a great log, which the spring floods had driven in through the alders, to feel the meaning of the place, if possible, and to have the vast sweet solitude all to myself for a little while.

A faint stir on my left, and another! Then up the path, twisting and gliding,



came Keeonekh, the first otter that I had ever seen in the wilderness. Where the sun flickered in through the alder leaves it glinted brightly on the shiny outer hairs of his rough coat. As he went his nose worked constantly, going far ahead of his bright little eyes to tell him what was in the path.

I was sitting very still, some distance to one side, and he did not see me. Near old Noel's deadfall he paused an instant with raised head, in the curious, snake-like attitude that all the weasels take when watching. Then he glided round the end of the trap, and disappeared down the portage.

When he was gone I stole out to examine his tracks. Then I noticed for the first time that the old path near the deadfall was getting moss-grown; a faint new path began to show among the alders. Some warning was there in the trap, and with cunning instinct all the wood dwellers turned aside, giving a wide berth to what they felt was dangerous but could not understand. The new path joined the old again, beyond the brook, and followed it straight to the river.



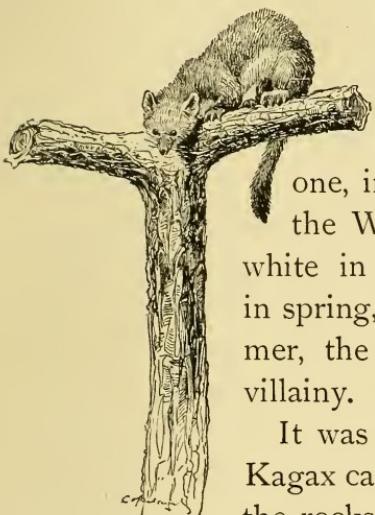
Again I examined the deadfall carefully, but of course I found nothing. That is a matter of instinct, not of eyes and ears; and it is past finding out. Then I went away for good, after driving a ring of stout stakes all about the trap to keep heedless little feet out of it. But I left it unsprung, just as it was, a rude tribute of remembrance to Keeonekh and the lost Indian.



**...Kagax the
Bloodthirsty.**



KAGAX THE BLOODTHIRSTY



HIS is the story of one day, the last one, in the life of Kagax the Weasel, who turns white in winter, and yellow in spring, and brown in summer, the better to hide his villainy.

It was early twilight when Kagax came out of his den in the rocks, under the old pine that lightning had blasted. Day and night were meeting swiftly but warily, as they always meet in the woods. The life of the sunshine came stealing nestwards and denwards in the peace of a long day and a full stomach; the night life began to stir in its coverts, eager, hungry, whining. Deep



in the wild raspberry thickets a wood thrush rang his vesper bell softly; from the mountain top a night-hawk screamed back an answer, and came booming down to earth, where the insects were rising in myriads. Near the thrush a striped chipmunk sat *chunk-a-chunking* his sleepy curiosity at a burned log which a bear had just torn open for red ants; while down on the lake shore a cautious *plash-plash* told where a cow moose had come out of the alders with her calf to sup on the yellow lily roots and sip the freshest water. Everywhere life was stirring; everywhere cries, calls, squeaks, chirps, rustlings, which only the wood-dweller knows how to interpret, broke in upon the twilight stillness.

Kagax grinned and showed all his wicked little teeth as the many voices went up from lake and stream and forest. "Mine, all mine —to kill," he snarled, and his eyes began to glow deep red. Then he stretched one sinewy paw after another, rolled over, climbed a tree, and jumped down from a swaying twig to get the sleep all out of him.

*Kagax**the**Bloodthirsty*

Kagax had slept too much, and was mad with the world. The night before, he had killed from sunset to sunrise, and much tasting of blood had made him heavy. So he had slept all day long, only stirring once to kill a partridge that had drummed near his den and waked him out of sleep. But he was too heavy to hunt then, so he crept back again, leaving the bird untasted, under the end of his own drumming log. Now Kagax was eager to make up for lost time; for all time is lost to Kagax that is not spent in killing. That is why he runs night and day, and barely tastes the blood of his victims, and sleeps only an hour or two of cat naps at a time — just long enough to gather energy for more evil doing.

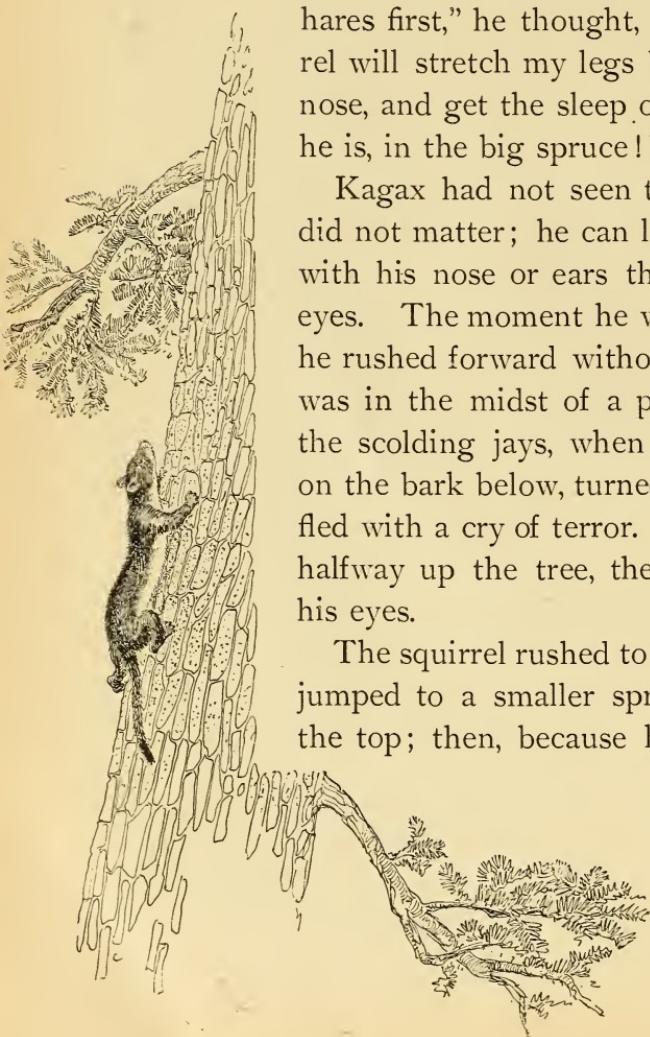
As he stretched himself again, a sudden barking and snickering came from a giant spruce on the hill above. Meeko the red squirrel had discovered a new jay's nest and was making a sensation over it, as he does over everything that he has not happened to see before. Had he known who was listening, he would have risked his neck in a

headlong rush for safety; for all the wild things fear Kagax as they fear death. But no wild thing ever knows till too late that a weasel is near.

Kagax listened a moment, a ferocious grin on his pointed face; then he stole towards the sound. "I intended to kill those young hares first," he thought, "but this fool squirrel will stretch my legs better, and point my nose, and get the sleep out of me — There he is, in the big spruce!"

Kagax had not seen the squirrel, but that did not matter; he can locate a victim better with his nose or ears than he can with his eyes. The moment he was sure of the place, he rushed forward without caution. Meeko was in the midst of a prolonged snicker at the scolding jays, when he heard a scratch on the bark below, turned, looked down, and fled with a cry of terror. Kagax was already halfway up the tree, the red fire blazing in his eyes.

The squirrel rushed to the end of a branch, jumped to a smaller spruce, ran that up to the top; then, because his fright had made



*Kagax**the**Bloodthirsty*

him forgot the tree paths that ordinarily he knew very well, he sprang out and down to the ground, a clear fifty feet, breaking his fall by catching and holding for an instant a swaying fir tip on the way. Then he rushed pell-mell over logs and rocks, and through the underbrush to a maple, and from that across a dozen trees to another giant spruce, where he ran up and down desperately over half the branches, crossing and crisscrossing his trail, and dropped panting at last into a little crevice under a broken limb. There he crouched into the smallest possible space and watched, with an awful fear in his eyes, the rough trunk below.

Far behind him came Kagax, grim, relentless, silent as death. He paid no attention to scratching claws nor swaying branches, never looking for the jerking red tip of Meeko's tail, nor listening for the loud thump of his feet when he struck the ground. A pair of brave little flycatchers saw the chase and rushed at the common enemy, striking him with their beaks, and raising an outcry that brought a score of frightened, clamoring



birds to the scene. But Kagax never heeded. His whole being seemed to be concentrated in the point of his nose. He followed like a bloodhound to the top of the second spruce, sniffed here and there till he caught the scent of Meeko's passage through the air, ran to the end of a branch in the same direction and leaped to the ground, landing not ten feet from the spot where the squirrel had struck a moment before. There he picked up the trail, followed over logs and rocks to the maple, up to the third branch, and across fifty yards of intervening branches to the giant spruce, where his victim sat half paralyzed, watching from his crevice.

Here Kagax was more deliberate. Left and right, up and down he went with deadly patience, from the lowest branch to the top, a hundred feet above, following every cross and winding of the trail. A dozen times he stopped, went back, picked up the fresher trail, and went on again. A dozen times he passed within a few feet of his victim, smelling him strongly, but scorning to use his eyes till his nose had done its perfect work.

*Kagax**the**Bloodthirsty*

So he came to the last turn, followed the last branch, his nose to the bark, straight to the crevice under the broken branch, where Meeko crouched shivering, knowing it was all over.

There was a cry, that no one heeded in the woods; there was a flash of sharp teeth, and the squirrel fell, striking the ground with a heavy thump. Kagax ran down the trunk, sniffed an instant at the body without touching it, and darted away to the form among the ferns. He had passed it at daylight when he was too heavy for killing.

Halfway to the lake he stopped; a thrilling song from a dead spruce top bubbled out over the darkening woods. When a hermit thrush sings like that, his nest is somewhere just below. Kagax began twisting in and out like a snake among the bushes, till a stir in a tangle of raspberry vines, which no ears but his or an owl's would ever notice, made him shrink close to the ground and look up. The red fire blazed in his eyes again; for there was

Mother Thrush just settling upon her nest,
not five feet from his head.



To climb the raspberry vines without shaking them, and so alarming the bird, was out of the question; but there was a fire-blasted tree just behind. Kagax climbed it stealthily on the side away from the bird, crept to a branch over the nest, and leaped down. Mother Thrush was preening herself sleepily, feeling the grateful warmth of her eggs and listening to the wonderful song overhead, when the blow came—and the pretty nest would never again wait for a brooding mother in the twilight.

All the while the wonderful song went on; for the hermit thrush, pouring his soul out, far above on the dead spruce top, heard not a sound of the tragedy below.

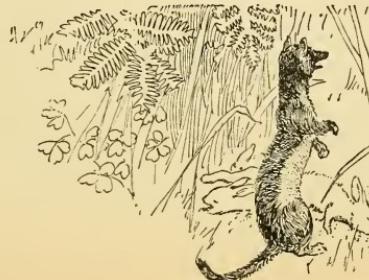
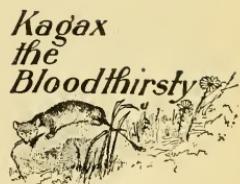
Kagax flung the warm body aside savagely, bit through the ends of the three eggs, wishing they were young thrushes, and leaped to the ground. There he just tasted the brain of his victim to whet his appetite, listened a moment, crouching among the dead leaves, to the melody overhead, wishing it were

darker, so that the hermit would come down and he could end his barbarous work. Then he glided away to the young hares.

There were five of them in the form, hidden among the coarse brakes of a little opening. Kagax went straight to the spot. A weasel never forgets. He killed them all, one after another, slowly, deliberately, by a single bite through the spine, tasting only the blood of the last one. Then he wriggled down among the warm bodies and waited, his nose to the path by which Mother Hare had gone away. He knew well that she would soon be coming back.

Presently he heard her, *put-a-put, put-a-put*, hopping along the path, with a waving line of ferns to show just where she was. Kagax wriggled lower among his helpless victims; his eyes blazed red again, so red that Mother Hare saw them and stopped short. Then Kagax sat up straight among the dead babies and screeched in her face.

The poor creature never moved a step; she only crouched low before her own door and began to shiver violently. Kagax ran





up to her; raised himself on his hind legs so as to place his fore paws on her neck; chose his favorite spot behind the ears, and bit. The hare straightened out, the quivering ceased. A tiny drop of blood followed the sharp teeth on either side. Kagax licked it greedily and hurried away, afraid to spoil his hunt by drinking.

But he had scarcely entered the woods, running heedlessly, when the moss by a great stone stirred with a swift motion. There was a squeak of fright as Kagax jumped forward like lightning—but too late. Tookhees the timid little wood mouse, who was digging under the moss for twin-flower roots to feed his little ones, had heard the enemy coming, and dived headlong into his hole, just in time to escape the snap of Kagax's teeth.

That angered the fiery little weasel like poking a stick at him. To be caught napping, or to be heard running through the woods, is more than he can possibly stand. His eyes fairly snapped as he began digging furiously. Below, he could hear a chorus of

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faint squeaks, the clamor of young wood mice for their supper. But a few inches down, and the hole doubled under a round stone, then vanished between two roots close together. Try as he would, Kagax could only wear his claws out, without making any progress. He tried to force his shoulders through; for a weasel thinks he can go anywhere. But the hole was too small. Kagax cried out in rage and took up the trail. A dozen times he ran it from the hole to the torn moss, where Tookhees had been digging roots, and back again; then, sure that all the wood mice were inside, he tried to tear his way between the obstinate roots. As well try to claw down the tree itself.

All the while Tookhees, who always has just such a turn in his tunnel, and who knows perfectly when he is safe, crouched just below the roots, looking up with steady little eyes, like two black beads, at his savage pursuer, and listening in a kind of dumb terror to his snarls of rage.

Kagax gave it up at last and took to running in circles. Wider and wider he went,



running swift and silent, his nose to the ground, seeking other mice on whom to wreak his vengeance. Suddenly he struck a fresh trail and ran it straight to the clearing, where a foolish field mouse had built a nest in a tangle of dry brakes. Kagax caught and killed the mother as she rushed out in alarm. Then he tore the nest open and killed all the little ones. He tasted the blood of one and went on again.

The failure to catch the wood mouse still rankled in his head and kept his eyes bright red. Abruptly he turned from his course along the lake shore; he began to climb the ridge. Up and up he went, crossing a dozen trails that ordinarily he would have followed, till he came to where a dead tree had fallen and lodged against a big spruce, near the summit. There he crouched in the under-brush and waited.

Near the top of the dead tree a pair of pine martens had made their den in the hollow trunk, and reared a family of young martens that drew Kagax's evil thoughts like a magnet. The marten belongs to the weasel's

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own family; therefore, as a choice bit of revenge, Kagax would rather kill him than anything else. A score of times he had crouched in this same place and waited for his chance. But the marten is larger and stronger every way than the weasel and, though shyer, almost as savage in a fight. And Kagax was afraid.

But to-night Kagax was in a more vicious mood than ever before; and a weasel's temper is always the most vicious thing in the woods. He stole forward at last and put his nose to the foot of the leaning tree. Two fresh trails went out; none came back. Kagax followed them far enough to be sure that both martens were away hunting; then he turned and ran like a flash up the incline and into the den.

In a moment he came out, licking his chops greedily. Inside, the young martens lay just as they had been left by the mother; only they began to grow very cold. Kagax ran to the great spruce, along a branch into another tree; then to the ground by a dizzy jump. There he ran swiftly for a good half

hour in a long diagonal down towards the lake, crisscrossing his trail here and there as he ran.



Once more his night's hunting began, with greater zeal than before. He was hungry now; his nose grew keen as a brier for every trail. A faint smell stopped him, so faint that the keenest-nosed dog or fox would have passed without turning,—the smell of a brooding partridge on her eggs. There she was, among the roots of a pine, sitting close and blending perfectly with the roots and the brown needles. Kagax moved like a shadow; his nose found the bird; before she could spring he was on her back, and his teeth had done their evil work. Once more he tasted the fresh brains with keen relish. He broke all the eggs, so that none else might profit by his hunting, and went on again.

On some moist ground, under a hemlock, he came upon the fresh trail of a wandering hare—no simple, unsuspecting mother coming back to her babies, but a big, strong, suspicious fellow, who knew how to make a run

for his life. Kagax was still fresh and eager; here was game that would stretch his muscles. The red lust of killing flamed into his eyes as he jumped away on the trail.

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Kagax



Soon, by the long distances between tracks, he knew that the hare was startled. The scent was fresher now, so fresh that he could follow it in the air, without putting his nose to the ground.

Suddenly a great commotion sounded among the bushes just ahead, where a moment before all was still. The hare had been lying there, watching his back track to see what was following. When he saw the red eyes of Kagax, he darted away wildly. A few hundred yards, and the foolish hare, who could run far faster than his pursuer, dropped in the bushes again to watch and see if the weasel were still after him.

Kagax was following swiftly, silently. Again the hare bounded away, only to stop and scare himself into fits by watching his own trail till the red eyes of the weasel blazed into view. So it went on for a half-hour, through brush and brake and swamp,

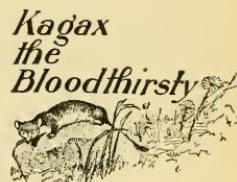


till the hare had lost all his wits and began to run wildly in small circles. Then Kagax turned, ran the back track a little way, and crouched flat on the ground.

In a moment the hare came tearing along on his own trail—straight towards the yellow-brown ball under a fern tip. Kagax waited till he was almost run over; then he sprang up and screeched. That ended the chase. The hare just dropped on his fore paws. Kagax jumped for his head; his teeth met; the hunger began to gnaw, and he drank his fill greedily.

For a time the madness of the chase increased within him. Keener than ever to kill, he darted away on a fresh trail. But soon his feast began to tell; his feet grew heavy. Angry at himself, he lay down to sleep their weight away.

Far behind him, under the pine by the partridge's nest, a long dark shadow seemed to glide over the ground. A pointed nose touched the leaves here and there; over the nose a pair of fierce little eyes glowed deep red as Kagax's own. So the shadow came



to the partridge's nest, passed over it, minding not the scent of broken eggs nor of the dead bird, but only the scent of the weasel, and vanished into the underbrush on the trail.

Kagax woke with a start and ran on. A big bullfrog croaked down on the shore. Kagax stalked and killed him, leaving his carcass untouched among the lily pads. A dead pine in a thicket attracted his suspicion. He climbed it swiftly, found a fresh round hole, and tumbled in upon a mother bird and a family of young woodpeckers. He killed them all, and hunted the tree over for the father bird, the great black logcock that makes the wilderness ring with his tattoo. But the logcock heard claws on the bark and flew to another tree, making a great commotion in the darkness as he blundered along, but not knowing what it was that had startled him.

So the night wore on, with Kagax killing in every thicket, yet never satisfied with killing. He thought longingly of the hard winter, when game was scarce and he had



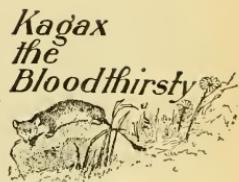
made his way out over the snow to the settlement, and lived among the chicken coops. "Twenty big hens in one roost—that was killing," snarled Kagax savagely, as he strangled two young herons in their nest, while the mother bird went on with her frogging, not ten yards away among the lily pads, and never heard a rustle.

Toward morning he turned homeward, making his way back in a circle along the top of the ridge where his den was, and killing as he went. He had tasted too much; his feet grew heavier than they had ever been before. He thought angrily that he would have to sleep another whole day. And to sleep a whole day, while the wilderness was just beginning to swarm with life, filled Kagax with snarling rage.

A mother hare darted away from her form as the weasel's wicked eyes looked in upon her. Kagax killed the little ones and had started after the mother, when a shiver passed over him and he turned back to listen. He had been moving more slowly of late; several times he had looked behind

him with the feeling that he was followed. He stole back to the hare's form and lay hidden, watching his back track. He shivered again. "If it were not stronger than I, it would not follow my trail," thought Kagax. The fear of a hunted thing came upon him. He remembered the marten's den, the strangled young ones, the two trails that left the leaning tree. "They must have turned back long ago," thought Kagax, and darted away. His back was cold now, cold as ice.

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But his feet grew very heavy ere he reached his den. A faint light began to show over the mountain across the lake. Killooleet, the white-throated sparrow, saw it, and his clear morning song tinkled out of the dark underbrush. Kagax's eyes glowed red again; he stole toward the sound for a last kill. Young sparrows' brains are a dainty dish; he would eat his fill, since he must sleep all day. He found the nest; he had placed his fore paws against the tree that held it, when he dropped suddenly; the shivers began to course all over him. Just below, from a stub in a dark thicket, a deep



Whooo-hoo-hoo! rolled out over the startled woods.

It was Kookooskoos, the great horned owl, who generally hunts only in the evening twilight, but who, with growing young ones to feed, sometimes uses the morning twilight as well. Kagax lay still as a stone. Over him the sparrows, knowing the danger, crouched low in their nest, not daring to move a claw lest the owl should hear.

Behind him the same shadow that had passed over the partridge's nest looked into the hare's form with fierce red eyes. It followed Kagax's trail over that of the mother hare, turned back, sniffed the earth, and came hurrying silently along the ridge.

Kagax crept stealthily out of the thicket. He had an awful fear now of his feet; for, heavy with the blood he had eaten, they would rustle the leaves, or scratch on the stones, that all night long they had glided over in silence; and the owl hears everything. He was near his den now. He could see the old pine that lightning had blasted, towering against the sky over the dark spruces.





Two sets of strong curved claws dropped down from the shadow

*Kagax**the**Bloodthirsty*

Again the deep *Who-o-o-hoo-hoo!* rolled over the hillside. To Kagax, who gloats over his killing except when he is afraid, it became an awful accusation. "Who has killed where he cannot eat? who strangled a brooding bird? who murdered his own kin?" came thundering through the woods. Kagax darted for his den. His hind feet struck a rotten twig that they should have cleared; it broke with a sharp snap. In an instant a huge shadow swept down from the stub and hovered over the sound. Two fierce yellow eyes looked in upon Kagax, crouching and trying to hide under a fir tip.

Kagax whirled when the eyes found him and two sets of strong curved claws dropped down from the shadow. With a savage snarl he sprang up, and his teeth met; but no blood followed the bite, only a flutter of soft brown feathers. Then one set of sharp claws gripped his head; another set met deep in his back. Kagax was jerked swiftly into the air, and his evil doing was ended forever.

There was a faint rustle in the thicket as the shadow of Kookooskoos swept away to

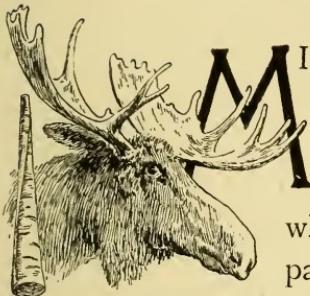


his nest. The long lithe form of a pine marten glided straight to the fir tip, where Kagax had been a moment before. His movements were quick, nervous, silent; his eyes glowed like two rubies over his twitching nostrils. He circled swiftly about the end of the lost trail. His nose touched a brown feather, another, and he glided back to the fir tip. A drop of blood was soaking slowly into a dead leaf. The marten thrust his nose into it. One long sniff, while his eyes blazed; then he raised his head, cried out once savagely, and glided away on the back track.

A detailed woodcut-style illustration of a moose's head, facing right. The moose has a large, dark, textured coat, a prominent set of antlers with several points, and a slightly open mouth showing its tongue and teeth.

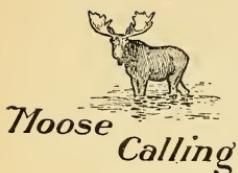
MOOSE CALLING

MOOSE CALLING



MIDNIGHT in the wilderness. The belated moon wheels slowly above the eastern ridge, where for a few minutes past a mighty pine and hundreds of pointed spruce tops have been standing out in inky blackness against the gray and brightening background. The silver light steals swiftly down the evergreen tops, sending long black shadows creeping before it, and falls glistening and shimmering across the sleeping waters of a forest lake. No ripple breaks its polished surface; no splash of musquash or leaping trout sends its vibrations up into the still, frosty air; no sound of beast or bird awakens the echoes of the silent forest. Nature seems dying, her life frozen out of

her by the chill of the October night; and no voice tells of her suffering.



A moment ago the little lake lay all black and uniform, like a great well among the hills, with only glimmering star-points to reveal its surface. Now, down in a bay below a grassy point, where the dark shadows of the eastern shore reach almost across, a dark object is lying silent and motionless on the lake. Its side seems gray and uncertain above the water; at either end is a dark mass, that in the increasing light takes the form of human head and shoulders. A bark canoe with two occupants is before us; but so still, so lifeless apparently, that till now we thought it part of the shore beyond.

There is a movement in the stern; the profound stillness is suddenly broken by a frightful roar: *M-wah-úh! M-waah-úh!* *M-w-wā-a-ā-ā-ā!* The echoes rouse themselves swiftly, and rush away confused and broken, to and fro across the lake. As they die away among the hills there is a sound from the canoe as if an animal were walking in shallow water, *splash, splash, splash, klop!*

then silence again, that is not dead, but
listening.

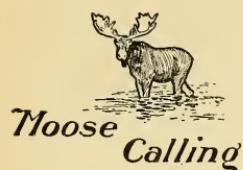
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Moose Calling



A half-hour passes ; but not for an instant does the listening tension of the lake relax. Then the loud bellow rings out again, startling us and the echoes, though we were listening for it. This time the tension increases an hundredfold ; every nerve is strained ; every muscle ready. Hardly have the echoes been lost when, from far up the ridges, comes an ugly roar that penetrates the woods like a rifle-shot. Again it comes, and nearer ! Down in the canoe a paddle blade touches the water noiselessly from the stern ; and over the bow there is the glint of moonlight on a rifle barrel. The roar is now continuous on the summit of the last low ridge. Twigs crackle, and branches snap. There is the thrashing of mighty antlers among the underbrush, the pounding of heavy hoofs upon the earth ; and straight down the great bull rushes like a tempest, nearer, nearer, till he bursts with tremendous crash through the last fringe of alders out upon the grassy point.— And then the heavy

boom of a rifle rolling across the startled lake.



Such is moose calling.

The call of the cow moose, which the hunter always uses at first, is an explosive bellow, quite impossible to describe accurately. Before ever hearing it, I had frequently asked Indians and hunters what it was like. The answers were rather unsatisfactory. "Like a tree falling," said one. "Like the sudden swell of a cataract at night," said another. "Like a rifle-shot, or a man shouting hoarsely," said a third; and so on, till like a menagerie at feeding time was my idea of it.

One night, as I sat with my friend at the door of our bark tent, eating our belated supper in tired silence, while the rush of the salmon pool near and the sigh of the night wind in the spruces were lulling us to sleep as we ate, a sound suddenly filled the forest, and was gone. Strangely enough, we pronounced the word *moose* together, though neither of us had ever heard the sound before. 'Like a gun in a fog' would describe

the sound to me better than anything else; though after hearing it many times the simile is not at all accurate. This first indefinite sound is heard early in the season. Later it is prolonged and more definite, as I have given it.

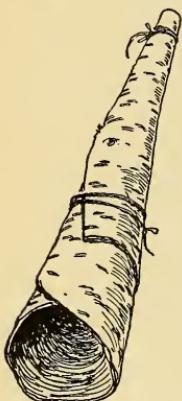
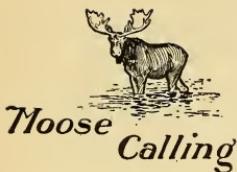
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Moose Calling



The answer of the bull varies but little. It is a short, hoarse, grunting roar, frightfully ugly when close at hand, and leaving no doubt as to the mood he is in. Sometimes, when a bull is shy and the hunter thinks he is near and listening, though no sound gives any idea of his whereabouts, he follows the bellow of the cow by the short roar of the bull, at the same time snapping the sticks under his feet, and thrashing the bushes with a club. Then, if the bull answers, look out. Jealous, and fighting mad, he hurls himself out of his concealment and rushes straight in to meet his rival. Once aroused in this way he heeds no danger, and the eye must be clear and the muscles steady to stop him surely ere he reaches the thicket where the hunter is concealed.

The trumpet with which the calling is



done is a piece of birch bark, rolled up cone-shape, with the smooth side within. It is fifteen or sixteen inches long, about five inches in diameter at the larger, and one inch at the smaller end. The right hand is folded round the smaller end for a mouth-piece; into this the caller grunts and roars and bellows, at the same time swinging the trumpet's mouth in sweeping curves to imitate the peculiar quaver of the cow's call. If the bull is near and suspicious, the sound is deadened by holding the mouth of the trumpet close to the ground. This, to me, imitates the real sound more accurately than any other attempt.

So many conditions must be met at once for successful calling, and so warily does a bull approach, that the chances are always strongly against the hunter's seeing his game. The old bulls are shy from much hunting; the younger ones fear the wrath of an older rival. It is only once in a lifetime, and far back from civilization where the moose have not been hunted, that one's call is swiftly answered by a savage old bull that knows no

fear. Here one is never sure what response his call will bring; and the spice of excitement, and perhaps danger, is added to the sport.

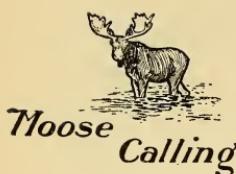
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Moose Calling'



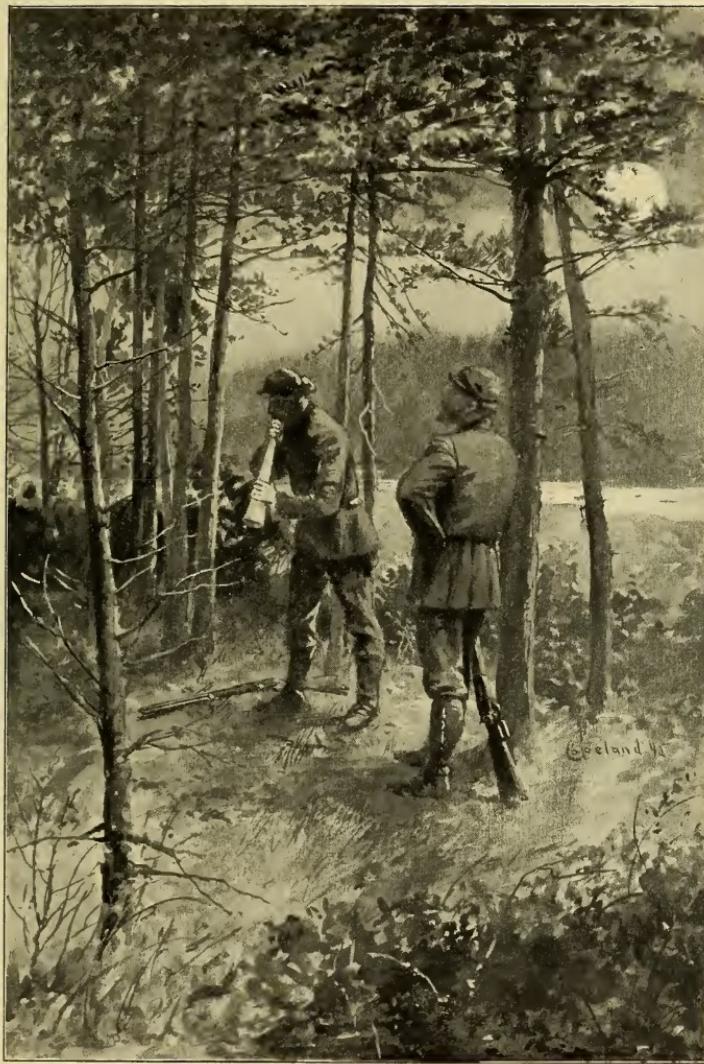
In illustration of the uncertainty of calling, the writer recalls with considerable pride his first attempt, which was somewhat startling in its success. It was on a lake, far back from the settlements, in northern New Brunswick. One evening, while returning from fishing, I heard the bellow of a cow moose on a hard-wood ridge above me. Along the base of the ridge stretched a bay with grassy shores, very narrow where it entered the lake, but broadening out to fifty yards across, and reaching back half a mile to meet a cold stream that came down from a smaller lake among the hills. All this I noted carefully while gliding past; for it struck me as an ideal place for moose calling, if one were hunting.

The next evening, while fishing alone in the stream, I heard the moose again, on the same ridge, and in a sudden spirit of curiosity determined to try the effect of a roar



or two on her, in imitation of an old bull. I had never heard of a cow answering the call; and I had no suspicion then that the bull was anywhere near. I was not an expert caller. Under tuition of my Indian I had practised two or three times, till he told me, with charming frankness, that possibly a *man* might mistake me for a moose, if he had not heard one very often. Here was a chance for more practice and a bit of variety. If it frightened the moose it would do no harm, as we were not hunting.

Running the canoe ashore, below where the moose had called, I peeled the bark from a young birch, rolled it into a trumpet and, standing on the grassy bank, uttered the deep grunt of a bull two or three times in quick succession. The effect was tremendous. From the summit of the ridge, not two hundred yards above where I stood, the angry challenge of a bull was hurled down upon me out of the woods. Then it seemed as if a steam engine were crashing full speed through the underbrush. In fewer seconds than it takes to write it, the canoe was well



Possibly a *man* might mistake me for a moose

Moose Calling

out into deep water, lying motionless with the bow inshore. A moment later a huge bull plunged through the fringe of alders to the open bank, gritting his teeth, grunting, *chocking*, stamping the earth savagely, and thrashing the bushes with his great antlers — as ugly a picture as one would care to see in the woods.

He seemed bewildered at not seeing his rival, ran swiftly along the bank, turned and came swinging back again, all the while uttering his hoarse challenge. Then the canoe swung in the slight current; in getting control of it again the movement attracted his attention, and he saw me for the first time. In a moment he was down the bank into shallow water, striking with his hoofs and tossing his huge head up and down like an angry bull. Fortunately the water was deep, and he did not try to swim out; for there was not a weapon of any kind in the canoe.

When I started down towards the lake, after baiting the bull's fury awhile by shaking the paddle and splashing water at him,



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he followed me along the bank, keeping up his threatening demonstrations. Down near the lake he plunged suddenly ahead before I realized the danger, splashed out into the narrow opening in front of the canoe — and there I was, trapped.

It was dark when I at last got out of it. To get by the ugly beast in that narrow opening was out of the question, as I found out after a half-hour's trying. Just at dusk I turned the canoe and paddled slowly back; and the moose, leaving his post, followed as before along the bank. At the upper side of a little bay I paddled close up to shore, and waited till he ran round, almost up to me, before backing out into deep water. Splashing seemed to madden the brute, so I splashed him, till in his fury he waded out deeper and deeper, to strike the exasperating canoe with his antlers. When he would follow no further, I swung the canoe suddenly and headed for the opening at a racing stroke. I had a fair start before he understood the trick; but I never turned to see how he made the bank and circled the

little bay. The splash and plunge of hoots was fearfully close behind me as the canoe shot through the opening; and as the little bark swung round on the open waters of the lake, for a final splash and flourish of the paddle, and a yell or two of derision, there stood the bull in the inlet, still thrashing his antlers and *chacking* his teeth; and there I left him.

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Moose Calling

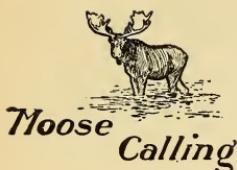


The season of calling is a short one, beginning early in September and lasting till the middle of October. Occasionally a bull will answer as late as November, but this is unusual. In this season a perfectly still night is the first requisite. The bull, when he hears the call, will often approach without making a sound. It is simply wonderful how still the great brute can be as he moves slowly through the woods. Then he makes a circuit, till he has gone completely round the spot where he heard the call; and if there is the slightest breeze blowing he scents the danger and is off on the instant.

On a still night his big trumpet-shaped ears are marvelously acute. Only absolute



silence on the hunter's part can insure success.



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Another condition quite as essential is moonlight. The moose sometimes calls just before dusk and just before sunrise; but the bull is more wary at such times, and very loth to show himself in the open. Night diminishes his extreme caution and, unless he has been hunted, he responds more readily. Only a bright moonlight can give any accuracy to a rifle-shot. To attempt it by starlight would result simply in frightening the game, or possibly running into danger.

By far the best place for calling, if one is in a moose country, is from a canoe on some quiet lake or river. A spot is selected midway between two open shores, near together if possible. On whichever side the bull answers, the canoe is backed silently away into the shadow against the opposite bank; and there the hunters crouch motionless till their game shows himself clearly in the moonlight on the open shore.

If there is no water in the immediate

Moose Calling

vicinity of the hunting ground, then a thicket in the midst of an open spot is the place to call. Such spots are found only about the barrens, which are treeless plains scattered here and there throughout the great northern wilderness. The scattered thickets on such plains are, without doubt, the islands of the ancient lakes that once covered them. Here the hunter collects a warm nest of dry moss and fir tips at sundown, and spreads the thick blanket that he has brought on his back all the weary way from camp; for without it the cold of the autumn night would be unendurable to one who can neither light a fire nor move about to get warm. When a bull answers a call from such a spot he will generally circle the barren, just within the edge of the surrounding forest, and unless enraged by jealousy will seldom venture far out into the open. This fearfulness of the open characterizes the moose in all places and seasons. He is a creature of the forest, never at ease unless within quick reach of its protection.

An exciting incident happened to Mitchell, my Indian guide, one autumn, while hunting



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Calling

on one of these barrens with a sportsman whom he was guiding. He was moose calling, one night, from a thicket near the middle of a barren. No answer came to his repeated call, though he felt quite sure that a bull was near, somewhere within the dark fringe of forest. He was about to try the roar of the bull, when it suddenly burst out of the woods behind them, in exactly the opposite quarter from that in which they believed their game was concealed. Scarcely had the echoes answered when, in front of them, a second challenge sounded sharp and fierce; and they saw, directly across the open, the underbrush at the forest's edge sway violently, as the bull they had long suspected broke out in a towering rage. He was slow in advancing, however, and Mitchell glided rapidly across the thicket, whither, a moment later, his excited hiss called his companion. From the opposite fringe of forest the second bull had hurled himself out, and was plunging straight towards them.

Crouching low among the firs they awaited his headlong rush; not without many a

startled glance backward, and a very uncomfortable sense of being trapped and frightened, as Mitchell confessed to me afterward. He had left his gun in camp; his employer had insisted upon it, in his eagerness to kill the moose himself.

The bull came rapidly within rifle-shot. In a minute more he would be within their hiding place; the rifle sight was trying to cover a vital spot, when, right behind them — at the thicket's edge, it seemed — a frightful roar and a furious pounding of hoofs brought them to their feet with a bound. A second later the rifle was lying among the bushes, and a panic-stricken hunter was scratching and smashing in a desperate hurry up among the branches of a low spruce, as if only the tip-top were half high enough. Mitchell was nowhere to be seen; unless one had the eyes of an owl to find him down among the roots of a fallen pine.

But the first moose smashed straight through the thicket, without looking up or down; and out on the open barren a tremendous struggle began. There was a minute's

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Moose Calling



confused uproar, of savage grunts and clashing antlers and hoarse, labored breathing; then the excitement of the fight was too strong to be resisted; a dark form wriggled out from among the roots, only to stretch itself flat under a bush and peer cautiously at the struggling brutes, not thirty feet away. Twice Mitchell hissed for his employer to come down; but that worthy was safe astride the highest branch that would bear his weight, with no desire evidently for a better view of the fight. Then Mitchell found the rifle among the bushes and, waiting till the bulls backed away for one of their furious charges, killed the larger one in his tracks. The second stood startled an instant, with raised head and quivering muscles, then dashed away across the barren and into the forest.

Such encounters are often numbered among the tragedies of the great wilderness. In tramping through the woods one sometimes comes upon two sets of huge antlers locked firmly together, and white bones, picked clean by hungry prowlers.

It needs no written record to tell their story.

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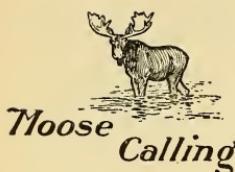
Moose Calling



Once I saw a duel that resulted differently. I heard a terrific uproar, and crept through the woods, thinking to have a savage wilderness spectacle all to myself. Two young bulls were fighting desperately in an open glade, without any cause for fighting that I could discover—except, perhaps, that both were immensely strong and over-proud of their first big horns.

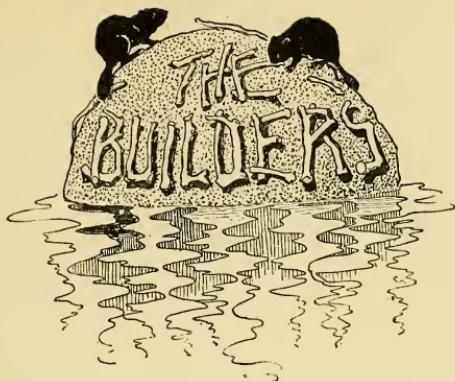
But I was not alone, as I expected. A great flock of crossbills swooped down into the spruces, and stopped whistling in their astonishment. A dozen red squirrels snickered and barked their approval, as the bulls butted each other. Meeko is always glad when mischief is afoot. High overhead floated a rare woods' raven, his head bent sharply downward to see. Moose-birds flitted in restless excitement from tree to bush. Kagax the weasel postponed his bloodthirsty errand to the young rabbits. And just beside me, under the fir tips, Tookhees the wood mouse forgot his fear

of the owl and the fox and his hundred enemies, and sat by his den in broad daylight, rubbing his whiskers nervously.

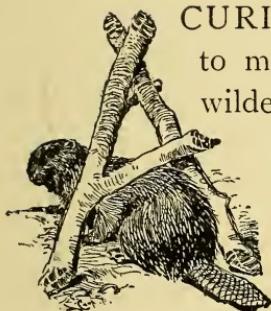


Moose Calling

So we watched, till the bull that was getting the worst of it backed near me, and got my wind, and the fight was over.



THE BUILDERS



CURIOUS bit of wild life came to me at dusk, one day, in the wilderness. It was midwinter, and the snow lay deep. I was sitting alone on a fallen tree, waiting for the moon to rise, so that I could follow the faint snowshoe trail to camp. I had followed a caribou too far that day, and this was the result — feeling along my own track by moonlight, with the thermometer sinking rapidly to the twenty-below-zero point.

There is scarcely any twilight in the woods; in ten minutes it would be quite dark; and I was wishing that I had blankets and an axe, so that I could camp where I was, when a gray shadow came stealing towards me through the trees. It was a

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Canada lynx. My fingers gripped the rifle hard, and the right mitten seemed to slip off of itself as I caught the glare of his fierce yellow eyes.

But the eyes were not looking at me at all. Indeed the lynx had not noticed me. He was stealing along, crouched low in the snow, his ears back, his stub tail twitching nervously, his whole attention fixed tensely on something beyond me, out on the barren. I wanted his beautiful skin; but I wanted more to find out what he was after; so I kept still and watched.

At the edge of the barren he crouched under a dwarf spruce, settled himself deeper in the snow by a wriggle or two till his feet were well under him and his balance perfect, and the red fire blazed in his eyes and his big muscles quivered. Then he hurled himself forward — one, two, a dozen bounds through flying snow, and he landed with a screech on the dome of a beaver house. There he jumped about, shaking an imaginary beaver like a fury, and gave another screech that made one's spine tingle. That



over, he stood very still, looking off over the beaver roofs that dotted the shore of a little pond there. The blaze died out of his eyes; a different look crept into them. He put his nose down to a tiny hole in the mound, the beavers' ventilator, and took a long sniff, while his whole body seemed to distend with the warm rich odor that poured up into his hungry nostrils. Then he rolled his head sadly, and went away.

Now all that was pure acting. A lynx likes beaver meat better than anything else; and this fellow had caught some of the colony, no doubt, in the well-fed autumn days, as they worked on their dam and houses. Hunger made him remember them, as he came through the wood on his nightly hunt after hares. He knew well that the beavers were safe; that months of intense cold had made their thick mud walls like granite. But he came, nevertheless, just to pretend he had caught one, and to remember how good his last full meal tasted when he ate it, in October.

It was all so boy-like, so unexpected, there

The Builders

in the heart of the wilderness, that I quite forgot that I wanted the lynx's skin. I was hungry too, and went out for a sniff at the ventilator; and it smelled good. I remembered the time, once, when I had eaten beaver, and was glad to get it. I walked about among the houses. On every dome there were lynx tracks, old and new, and the prints of a blunt nose in the snow. Evidently he came often to dine on the smell of good dinners. I looked the way he had gone, and began to be sorry for him. But there were the beavers, safe and warm and fearless within two feet of me, listening undoubtedly to the strange steps without. And that was good; for they are the most interesting creatures in all the wilderness.

Most of us know the beaver chiefly in a simile. "Working like a beaver," or "busy as a beaver," is one of those proverbial expressions that people accept without comment or curiosity. It is about one-third true, which is a generous proportion of truth for a proverb. In winter, for five long months at least, he does nothing but sleep and eat and keep

warm. "Lazy as a beaver" is then a good figure. And summer time is just one long holiday, and the beavers are jolly as grigs, with never a thought of work from morning till night. When the snow is gone, and the streams are clear, and the twitter of bird songs meets the beaver's ear as he rises from the dark passage, under water, that leads to his house,—then he forgets all settled habits and joins in the general heyday of nature. The well-built house that sheltered him from storm and cold, and defied even the wolverine to dig its owner out, is deserted for any otter's den or chance hole in the bank, where he may sleep away the sunlight in peace. The great dam, upon which he toiled so many nights, is left to the mercy of the freshet or the canoeeman's axe; and no splash of falling water through a break—that sound which, in autumn or winter, brings the beaver like a flash—will trouble his wise little head for a moment.

All the long summer he belongs to the tribe of Ishmael, wandering through lakes and streams wherever fancy leads him. It



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is as if he were bound to see the world after being cooped up in his narrow quarters all winter. Even the strong family ties, one of the most interesting things in beaver life, are for the time loosened. Every family group, when it breaks up housekeeping in the spring, represents five generations. First, there are the two old beavers, heads of the family and absolute rulers, who first engineered the big dam and houses, and have directed repairs for nobody knows how long. Next in importance are the baby beavers, no bigger than musquashes, with fur like silk velvet, and eyes always wide open at the wonders of the first season out; then the one- and two-year-olds, frisky as boys let loose from school, always in mischief and having to be looked after, and occasionally nipped; then the three-year-olds, who presently leave the group and go their separate ways in search of mates. So the long days go by in a kind of careless summer excursion; and when one finds their camping ground in his own summer roving through the wilderness, he looks upon it with curious

sympathy. Fellow campers are they, pitching their tents by sunny lakes and alder-fringed, trout-haunted brooks, always close to Nature's heart, and loving the wild, free life much as he does himself.

But when the days grow short and chill, and the twitter of warblers gives place to the *honk* of passing geese, and wild ducks gather in the lakes, then the heart of the beaver goes back to his home; and presently he follows his heart. September finds them gathered about the old dam again, the older heads filled with plans for repair and new houses and winter food and many other things. The grown-up males have brought their mates back to the old home; the females have found their places in other family groups. It is then that the beaver begins to be busy.

His first concern is for a stout dam across the stream that will give him a pond and plenty of deep water. To understand this, one must remember that the beaver intends to shut himself in a kind of prison all winter. He knows well that he is not safe on land

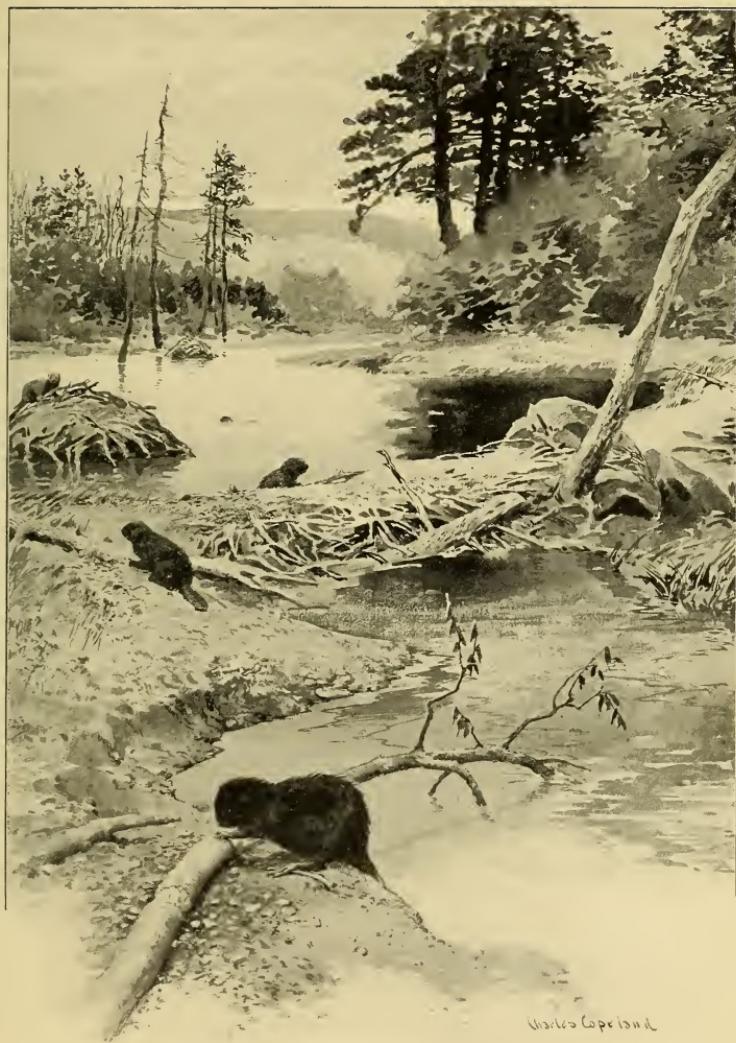


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a moment after the snow falls; that some prowling lucivee or wolverine would find his tracks and follow him, and that his escape to water would be cut off by thick ice. So he plans a big claw-proof house with no entrance save a tunnel in the middle, which leads through the bank to the bottom of his artificial pond. Once this pond is frozen over, he cannot get out till the spring sun sets him free. But he likes a big pond, that he may exercise a bit under water when he comes down for his dinner; and a deep pond, that he may feel sure the hardest winter will never freeze down to his doorway and shut him in. Still more important, the beaver's food is stored on the bottom; and it would never do to trust it to shallow water, else some severe winter it would get frozen into the ice, and the beavers starve in their prison. Ten to fifteen feet usually satisfies their instinct for safety; but to get that depth of water, especially on shallow streams, requires a huge dam and an enormous amount of work, to say nothing of planning.



Charles Copeland

An enormous amount of work

Beaver dams are solid structures always, built up of logs, brush, stones, and driftwood, well knit together by alder poles. One summer, in canoeing a wild, unknown stream, I met fourteen dams within a space of five miles. Through two of these my Indian and I broke a passage with our axes; the others were so solid that it was easier to unload our canoe and make a portage than to break through. Dams are found close together, like that, when a beaver colony has occupied a stream for years unmolested. The food-wood above the first dam being cut off, they move down stream; for the beaver always cuts on the banks above his dam, and lets the current work for him in transportation. Sometimes, when the banks are such that a pond cannot be made, three or four dams will be built close together, the back-water of one reaching up to the one above, like a series of locks on a canal. This is to keep the colony together, and yet give room for play and storage.

There is the greatest difference of opinion as to the intelligence displayed by the



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beavers in choosing a site for their dam, one observer claiming skill, ingenuity, even reason for the beavers; another claiming a mere instinctive haphazard piling together of materials anywhere in the stream. I have seen perhaps a hundred different dams in the wilderness, nearly all of which were well placed. Occasionally I have found one that looked like a stupid piece of work — two or three hundred feet of alder brush and gravel, across the widest part of a stream, when, by building just above or below, a dam one-fourth the length might have given them better water. This must be said, however, for the builders, that perhaps they found a better soil for digging their tunnels, or a more convenient spot for their houses near their own dam; or that they knew what they wanted better than their critic did. Undoubtedly the young beavers make frequent mistakes; but I think, from studying a good many dams, that they profit by disaster, and build better; and that, on the whole, their mistakes are not proportionally greater than those of human builders.



Sometimes a dam proves a very white elephant on their hands. The site is not well chosen, the shores above being too low, and the restrained water pours round the end of their dam, cutting it away. They build the dam longer at once; but again the water sweeps past on its work of destruction. So they keep on building, an interminable structure, till the frosts come, and they must cut their wood and tumble their houses together in a desperate hurry to be ready when the ice closes over them.

On alder streams, where the current is sluggish and the soil soft, one sometimes finds a wonderfully ingenious device to remedy the above difficulty. When the dam is built, and the water deep enough for safety, the beavers dig a canal around one end of the dam to carry off the surplus water. I know of nothing in all the woods and fields that brings one closer in thought and sympathy to the little wild folk than to come across one of these canals, the water pouring safely through it, the dam stretching straight and solid across the stream, and the domed houses rising beyond.

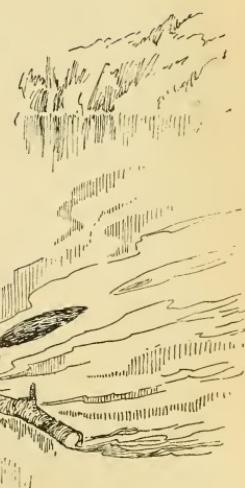
The Builders

Once I found where the beavers had utilized man's work. A huge dam had been built on a wilderness stream to secure a head of water for driving logs from the lumber woods. When the pines and fourteen-inch spruce were all gone, the works were abandoned, and the dam left—with the gates open, of course. A pair of young beavers, prospecting for a winter home, found the place and were suited exactly. They rolled a sunken log across the gates for a foundation, filled them up solidly with alder bushes and stones, and the work was done. When I found the place they had a pond a mile wide to play in. Their house was in a beautiful spot, under a big hemlock; and their doorway slanted off into twenty feet of water. That site was certainly well chosen.

Another dam, that I found one winter when caribou-hunting, was wonderfully well placed. No engineer could have chosen better. It was made by the same colony the lynx was after, and just below where he went through his pantomime for my benefit; his tracks were there too. The barrens, of

which I spoke, are treeless plains in the northern forest, the beds of ancient shallow lakes. The beavers found one with a stream running through it, and followed the stream to the foot of the barren, where two wooded points came out from either side and almost met. Here was formerly the outlet; and here the beavers built their dam, and so made the old lake over again. It must be a wonderfully fine place in summer—two or three thousand acres of playground, full of cranberries and luscious roots. In winter it is too shallow to be of much use, save for a few acres about the beavers' doorways.

There are three ways of dam-building in general use among the beavers. The first is for use on sluggish streams, where they can build up from the bottom. Two or three sunken logs form the foundation. Sticks, driftwood, and stout poles which the beavers cut on the banks, are piled on this and weighted with stones and mud. The stones are rolled in from the bank or moved considerable distances under water. The mud is carried in the beaver's paws, which he



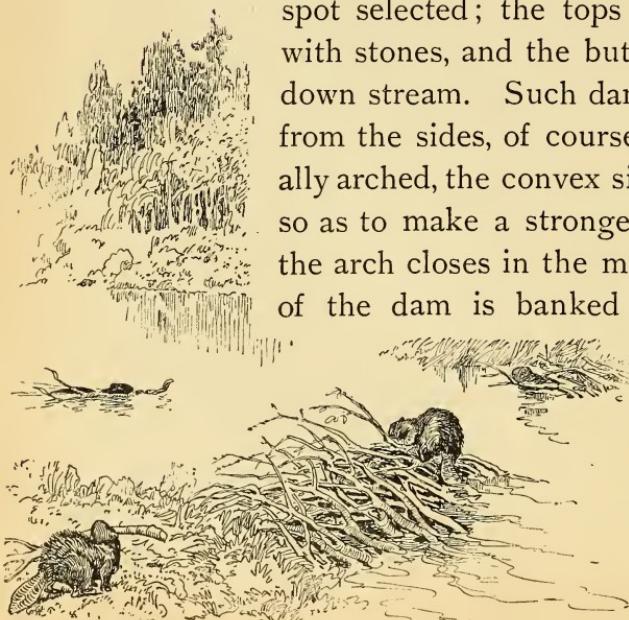
holds up against his chin, so as to carry a big handful without spilling.

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Beavers love such streams, with their alder shade and sweet grasses and fringe of wild meadow, better than all other places. And, by the way, most of the natural meadows and half the ponds of New England were made by beavers. If you go to the foot of any little meadow in the woods and dig at the lower end, where the stream goes out, you will find, sometimes ten feet under the surface, the remains of the first dam that formed the meadow when the water flowed back and killed the trees.

The second kind of dam is for swift streams. Stout, ten-foot brush is the chief material. The brush is floated down to the spot selected; the tops are weighted down with stones, and the butts left free, pointing down stream. Such dams must be built out from the sides, of course. They are generally arched, the convex side being up stream, so as to make a stronger structure. When the arch closes in the middle, the lower side of the dam is banked heavily with earth



and stones. That is shrewd policy on the beaver's part; once the arch is closed by brush, the current can no longer sweep away the earth and stones used for the embankment.

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The third kind is the strongest and easiest to build. It is for places where big trees lean out over the stream. Three or four beavers gather about a tree and begin to cut, sitting up on their broad tails. One stands above them on the bank, apparently directing the work. In a short time the tree is nearly cut through from the under side. Then the beaver above begins to cut down carefully. With the first warning crack he jumps aside, and the tree falls straight across, where it is wanted. All the beavers then disappear and begin cutting the branches that rest on the bottom. Slowly the tree settles till its trunk is at the right height to make the top of the dam. The upper branches are then trimmed close to the trunk, and are woven with alders among the long stubs sticking down from the trunk into the river bed. Stones, mud, and brush are used liberally to fill the chinks,

and in a remarkably short time the dam is complete.

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All the beaver's cutting is done by chisel-edged front teeth. There are two of these in each jaw, extending a good inch and a half outside the gums, and meeting at a sharp bevel. The inner sides of the teeth are softer and wear away faster than the outer, so that the bevel remains the same; and the action of the upper and lower teeth over each other keeps them always sharp. They grow so rapidly that a beaver must be constantly wood cutting to keep them worn down to comfortable size.

Often, on wild streams, you find a stick floating down to meet you showing a fresh cut. You grab it, and say: "Somebody is camped above here. That stick has just been cut with a sharp knife." But look closer; see that faint ridge the whole length of the cut, as if the knife had a tiny gap in its edge. That is where the beaver's two upper teeth meet, and the edge is not quite perfect. He cut that stick, thick as a man's thumb, at a single bite. To cut an alder, as

round as a teacup, is the work of a minute for the same tools; and a towering poplar tree falls in a remarkably short time when attacked by three or four beavers. Around the stump of such a tree you find a pile of two-inch chips, thick, clean cut and arched to the curve of the beaver's teeth. Judge the workman by his chips, and this is a good workman.

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When the dam is built the beaver cuts his winter food-wood. A colony of the creatures will often fell a whole grove of young birch or poplar on the bank above the dam. The branches with the best bark are then cut into short lengths, which are rolled into the stream and floated to the pool at the dam.

Considerable discussion has taken place as to how the beaver sinks his wood — for of course he must sink it; else it would freeze into the ice and be useless. The simplest way is to cut the wood early and leave it in the water, when it sinks of itself; for green birch and poplar soon get waterlogged and go to the bottom. If the nights

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grow suddenly cold before the wood sinks, the beavers take it down to the bottom and press it slightly into the mud; or else they push sticks under those that float against the dam, and more under these; and so on till the stream is full to the bottom, the weight of those above keeping the others down. Much of the wood is lost in this way by being frozen into the ice; but the beavers know that, and cut plenty.

When a beaver is hungry, in winter, he comes down under the ice, selects a stick, carries it up into his house, and eats the bark. Then he carries the peeled stick back under the ice, and puts it aside out of the way.

Once it occurred to me that soaking spoiled the flavor of bark, and that the beavers might like a fresh bite. So I cut a hole in the ice on the pool above their dam. Of course the chopping scared the beavers; it was vain to experiment that day. I spread a blanket and some thick boughs over the hole to keep it from freezing over too thickly, and went away.

Next day I pushed the end of a fresh birch pole down among the beavers' store, lay down with my face to the hole, drew a big blanket round my head to shut out the light, and watched. For a while it was all dark as a pocket; then I began to see things dimly. Presently a shadow shot along the bottom and grabbed the pole. It was a beaver, with a twenty-dollar coat on. He tugged; I held on tight—which surprised him so that he went back into his house to catch breath.

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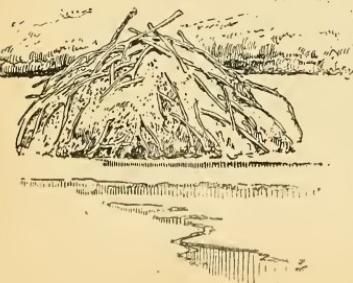


But the taste of fresh bark was in his mouth, and soon he was back with another beaver. Both took hold this time and pulled together. No use! They began to swim round, examining the queer pole on every side. "What kind of a stick are you, anyway?" one was thinking. "You didn't grow here, because I would have found you long ago." "And you're not frozen into the ice," said the other, "because you wiggle." Then they both took hold again, and I began to haul up carefully. I wanted to see them nearer. That surprised them immensely; but I think they would have held on, only

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for an accident. The blanket slipped away; a stream of light shot in; there were two great whirls in the water; and that was the end of the experiment. They did not come back, though I waited till I was almost frozen.

The beaver's house is the last thing attended to. He likes to build when the nights grow cold enough to freeze his mortar soon after it is laid. Two or three tunnels are dug from the bottom of the beaver pond up through the bank, coming to the surface together at the point where the center of the house is to be. Around this he lays solid foundations of log and stone in a circle from six to fifteen feet in diameter, according to the number of beavers to occupy the house. On these foundations he rears a thick mass of sticks and grass, which are held together by plenty of mud. The top is roofed by stout sticks arranged as in an Indian wigwam, and the whole domed over with grass, stones, sticks, and mud. Once this is solidly frozen, the beaver sleeps in peace; his house is burglar proof.





If on a lake shore, where the rise of water is never great, the beaver's house is four or five feet high. On streams subject to freshets the houses are much higher. As in the case of the musquash, a strange instinct guides the beaver in determining the height of his dwelling. He builds high or low, according to his expectations of high or low water; and he is rarely drowned out of the dry nest just under his curious dome.

Sometimes two or three families unite to build a single large house; but always, in such cases, each family has its separate apartment. When a house is dug open it is evident, from the different impressions, that each member of the family has his own bed, which he always occupies. Beavers are exemplary in their neatness; the house after five months' use is as neat as when first made.

All their building is primarily a matter of instinct, for a tame beaver builds miniature dams and houses on the floor of his cage. Still it is not an uncontrollable instinct, like that of most birds; nor blind, like that of

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rats and squirrels at times. I have found beaver houses on lake shores where no dam was built, simply because the water was deep enough, and none was needed. In vacation time the young beavers build for fun, just as boys build a dam wherever they can find running water. I am persuaded also (and this may explain some of the dams that seem stupidly placed) that at times the old beavers set the young to work in summer, in order that they may know how to build when it becomes necessary. This is a hard theory to prove, for the beavers work by night, preferably on dark, rainy nights, when they are safest on land to gather materials. But while building is instinctive, skilful building is the result of practice and experience. And some of the beaver dams show wonderful skill.

There is one beaver who never builds; who never troubles himself about house, or dam, or winter's store. I am not sure whether we ought to call him the genius or the lazy man of the family. The bank-beaver is a solitary old bachelor, living in a

den, like a mink, in the bank of a stream. He does not build a house, because a den under a cedar's roots is as safe and warm. He never builds a dam, because there are deep places in the river, where the current is too swift to freeze. He finds tender twigs much juicier, even in winter, than stale bark stored under water. As for his telltale tracks in the snow, his wits must guard him against enemies; and there is the open stretch of river to flee to.

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There are two theories among Indians and trappers to account for the bank-beaver's eccentricities. The first is that he has failed to find a mate and leaves the colony, or is driven out, to lead a lonely bachelor life. His conduct during the mating season certainly favors this theory; for never was anybody more diligent in his search for a wife than he. Up and down the streams and alder brooks of a whole wild countryside he wanders without rest, stopping here and there on a grassy point to gather a little handful of mud, like a child's mud pie, all patted smooth, in the midst of which is a

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little strong-smelling musk. When you find that sign, in a circle of carefully trimmed grass under the alders, you know that there is a young beaver on that stream looking for a wife. And when the young beaver finds his pie opened and closed again, he knows that there is a mate somewhere near, waiting for him. But the poor bank-beaver never finds his mate, and the next winter must go back to his solitary den. He is much more easily caught than other beavers; and the trappers say it is because he is lonely and tired of life.

The second theory is that generally held by Indians. They say the bank-beaver is lazy and refuses to work with the others; so they drive him out. When beavers are busy they are very busy, and tolerate no loafing. Perhaps he even tries to persuade them that all their work is unnecessary, and so shares the fate of reformers in general.

While examining the den of a bank-beaver last summer, another theory suggested itself. Is not this one of the rare animals in which all the instincts of his kind are lacking? He



does not build because he has no impulse to build; he does not know how. So he represents what the beaver was, thousands of years ago, before he learned how to construct his dam and house,—reappearing now, by some strange freak of heredity, and finding himself wofully out of place and time. The other beavers drive him away because all gregarious animals and birds have a strong fear and dislike of any irregularity in their kind. Even when the peculiarity is slight — a wound, or a deformity — they drive the poor victim from their midst remorselessly. It is a cruel instinct, but part of one of the oldest in creation, the instinct which preserves the species. This explains why the bank-beaver never finds a mate; none of the beavers will have anything to do with him.

This occasional lack of instinct is not peculiar to the beavers. Now and then a bird is hatched here in the North that has no impulse to migrate. He cries after his departing comrades, but never follows. So he remains, and is lost in the storms of winter.

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There are few creatures in the wilderness more difficult to observe than the beavers, both on account of their extreme shyness and their habit of working only by night. The best way to watch them at work is to make a break in their dam and pull the top from one of their houses, some autumn afternoon, at the time of full moon. Just before twilight you must steal back and hide, some distance from the dam. Even then the chances are against you, for the beavers are suspicious, keen of ear and nose, and generally refuse to show themselves till after the moon sets or you have gone away. You may have to break their dam half a dozen times before you see it repaired.

It is a most interesting sight when it comes at last, and well repays the watching. The water is pouring through a five-foot break in the dam; the roof of a house is in ruins. You have rubbed yourself all over with fir boughs, to destroy some of the scent in your clothes, and hidden yourself in the top of a fallen tree. The twilight goes; the moon wheels over the eastern spruces, flooding

the river with silver light. Still no sign of life. You are beginning to think of another disappointment; to think your toes cannot stand the cold another minute without stamping, which would spoil everything, when a ripple shoots swiftly across the pool, and a big beaver comes out on the bank. He sits up a moment, looking, listening; then goes to the broken house and sits up again, looking it all over, estimating damages, making plans. There is a commotion in the water; three others join him.— You are warm now.

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Meanwhile three or four more are swimming about the dam, surveying the damage there. One dives to the bottom, but comes up in a moment to report all safe below. Another is tugging at a thick pole just below you. Slowly he tows it out in front, balances a moment and lets it go—squarely across the break. Two others are cutting alders above; and here come the bushes, floating down, to repair the dam. Over at the damaged house two beavers are on the walls, raising the rafters into place; a third

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appears to be laying on the outer covering; a fourth is plastering with mud. Now and then one sits up straight, like a rabbit, listens, stretches his back to get the kinks out, then drops to his work again.

It is brighter now; moon and stars are glimmering in the pool. At the dam the sound of falling water grows faint, as the break is rapidly closed. The houses loom larger. Over the dome of the one broken the dark outline of a beaver passes triumphantly.



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Quick work that. You grow more interested; you stretch your neck to see—*splash!* A beaver gliding past has seen you. As he dives he gives the water a sharp blow with his broad tail, the danger signal of the beavers, and a startling one in the dead stillness. There is a sound as of a stick being plunged end first into the water; a few eddies go running about the pool, breaking up the moon's reflection; then silence again, and the lap of ripples on the shore.

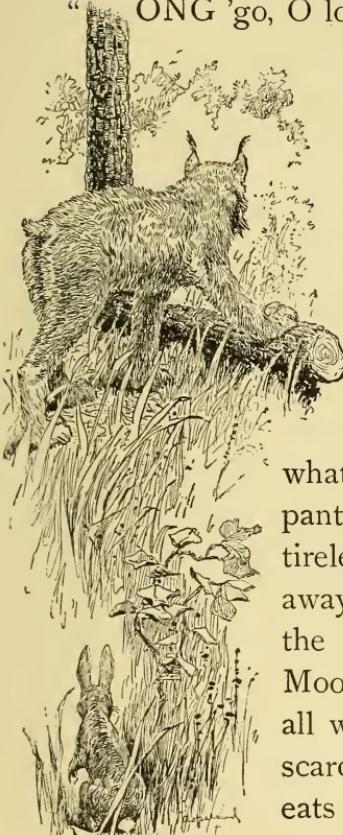
You can go home now; you will see nothing more to-night. There is a beaver under the other bank, in the shadow where you cannot see him, just his eyes and ears above water, watching you. He will not stir; nor will another beaver come out till you go away. As you find your canoe and paddle back to camp, a ripple, made by a beaver's nose, follows silently in the shadow of the alders. At the bend of the river, where you disappear, the ripple halts a while, like a projecting stub in the current, then turns and goes swiftly back. There is another splash;

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the builders come out again; a dozen ripples are scattering star reflections all over the pool; while the little wood folk pause a moment to look at the new works curiously, then go their ways, shy, silent, industrious, through the wilderness night.



UPWEEKIS THE SHADOW



"ONG 'go, O long time 'go," so says
Simmo the Indian,
Upweekis the lynx
came to Clote Scarpe
with a complaint.
"See," he said, "you
are good to every-
body but me. Pek-
quam the fisher is
cunning and pa-
tient; he can catch
what he will. Lhoks the
panther is strong and
tireless; nothing can get
away from him, not even
the great moose. And
Mooween the bear sleeps
all winter, when game is
scarce, and in summer
eats everything,—roots



and mice and berries and dead fish and meat and honey and red ants. So he is always full and happy. But my eyes are no good; they are bright, like Cheplahgan the eagle's, yet they cannot see anything unless it moves; for you have made every creature that hides just like the place he hides in. My nose is worse; it cannot smell Seksagadagee the grouse, though I walk over him asleep in the snow. And my feet make a noise in the leaves, so that Moktaques the rabbit hears me, and hides, and laughs behind me when I go to catch him. And I am always hungry. Make me now like the shadows that play, in order that nothing may notice me when I go hunting."

So Clote Scarpe, the great chief who was kind to all animals, gave Upweekis a soft gray coat that is almost invisible in the woods, summer or winter, and made his feet large, and padded them with soft fur; so that indeed he is like the shadows that play, for you can neither see nor hear him. But Clote Scarpe remembered Moktaques the rabbit also, and gave him two coats, a brown

one for summer and a white one for winter. Consequently he is harder than ever to see when he is quiet; and Upweekis must still depend upon his wits to catch him. As Upweekis has few wits to spare, Moktaques often sees him close at hand, and chuckles in his form under the brown ferns, or sits up straight, under the snow-covered hemlock tips, to watch the big lynx at his hunting.

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Sometimes, on a winter night, when you camp in the wilderness, and the snow is sifting down into your fire, and the woods are all still, a fierce screech breaks suddenly out of the darkness just behind your windbreak of boughs. You jump to your feet and grab your rifle; but Simmo, who is down on his knees before the fire, frying pork, only turns his head to listen a moment, and says: "Upweekis catch-um rabbit dat time." Then he gets closer to the fire and goes on with his cooking.

You are more curious than he, or you want the big cat's skin to take home with you. You steal away towards the cry, past



the little *commoosie* that you made hastily at sundown when the trail ended. There, with your back to the fire, the light does not dazzle your eyes; you can trace the shadows creeping in and out among the underbrush. But if Upweekis is there—and he probably is—you do not see him. He is a shadow among the shadows. Only there is this difference: shadows move no bushes. As you watch, a fir-tip stirs; a bit of snow drops down. You gaze intently at the spot. Then out of the deep shadow two living coals are suddenly kindled. They grow larger and larger, glowing, flashing, burning your eyes till you brush them swiftly with your hand. Your rifle jumps to position; the glowing coals are quenched on the instant. Then, when your eyes have blinked the fascination out of them, the shadows go creeping in and out again, and Upweekis is lost amongst them.

Sometimes you see him again. Moktaques, the big white hare, who forgets a thing the moment it is past, sees you standing there and is full of curiosity. He forgets that he was being hunted a moment ago, and

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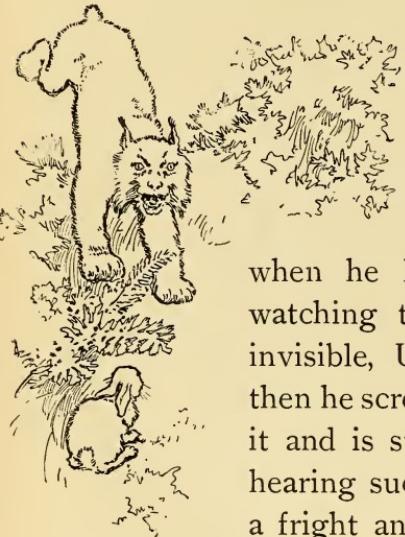
comes to see what you are. You back away toward the fire. He scampers off in a fright, but presently comes hopping after you. Watch the underbrush behind him sharply. In a moment it stirs stealthily, as if a shadow were moving it; and there is the lynx, stealing along in the snow with his eyes blazing. Again Moktaques feels that he is hunted, and does the only safe thing; he crouches low in the snow, where a fir-tip bends over him, and is still as the earth. His color hides him perfectly.

Upweekis has lost the trail again; he wavers back and forth, like a shadow under a swinging lamp, turning his great head from side to side. He cannot see nor hear nor smell his game; but he saw a bit of snow fly a moment ago, and knows that it came from Moktaques' big pads. Don't stir now; be still as the great spruce in whose shadow you stand; and, once in a hunter's lifetime, you will see a curious tragedy.

The lynx settles himself in the snow, with all four feet close together, ready for a spring. As you watch and wonder, a screech rings

out through the woods, so sharp and fierce that no rabbit's nerves can hear it and be still. Moktaques jumps straight up in the air. The lynx sees it, whirls, hurls himself at the spot. Another screech, a different one, and then you know that it's all over.

And that is why Upweekis' cry is so fierce and sudden on a winter night. Your fire attracts the rabbits. Upweekis knows this,



and comes to hide among the shadows. But he never catches anything unless he blunders onto it. That is why he wanders so much in winter, and passes twenty rabbits before he catches one. So when he knows that Moktaques is near, watching the light, but remaining himself invisible, Upweekis crouches for a spring; then he screeches fearfully. Moktaques hears it and is startled, as anybody else would be, hearing such a cry near him. He jumps in a fright and pays the penalty.

If the lynx is a big one, and very hungry, as he generally is in winter, you may get some unpleasant impressions of him in



another way when you venture far from your fire. His eyes blaze out at you from the darkness, just two big glowing spots, which are all you see, and which disappear at your first motion. Then as you strain your eyes, and watch and listen, you feel the coals upon you again from another place; and there they are, under a bush on your left, creeping closer and blazing deep red. They disappear suddenly as the lynx turns his head, only to reappear and fascinate you from another point. So he plays with you, as if you were a great mouse, creeping closer all the time, swishing his stub tail fiercely to lash himself up to the courage point of springing. But his movements are so still and shadowy that unless he follows you as you back away to the fire, and so comes within the circle of light, the chances are that you will never see him.

Indeed the chances are always that way, day or night, unless you turn hunter and set a trap for him in the rabbit paths which he follows nightly, and hang a bait over it to make him look up and forget his steps. In

summer he goes to the burned lands for the rabbits that swarm in the thickets, and to rear his young in seclusion. You find his tracks there all about, and the marks of his killing; but though you watch and prowl all day and come home in the twilight, you will learn little. He hears you and skulks away amid the lights and shadows of the hillside, and so hides himself—in plain sight, sometimes, like a young partridge—that he manages to keep a clean record in the notebook where you hoped to write down all about him.

In winter you cross his tracks, great round tracks that wander everywhere through the big woods, and you think: Now I shall find him surely. But though you follow for miles and learn much about him, finding where he passed this rabbit close at hand, without suspecting it, and caught that one by accident, and missed the partridge that burst out of the snow under his very feet,—still Upweekis himself remains only a shadow of the woods. Once, after a glorious long tramp on his trail, I found the spot where he had been sleeping a moment before. But

beside that experience I must put fifty other trails that I have followed, of which I never saw the end nor the beginning. And whenever I have found out anything about Upweekis, it has generally come unexpectedly, as most good things do.

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Once the chance came as I was watching a muskrat at his supper. It was twilight in the woods. I had drifted in close to shore in my canoe to see what Musquash was doing on top of a rock. All muskrats have favorite eating places—a rock, a stranded log, a tree boll that leans out over the water, and always a pretty spot—whither they bring food from a distance, evidently for the purpose of eating it where they feel most at home. This one had gathered a half-dozen big fresh-water clams upon his dining table, and sat down in the midst to enjoy the feast. He would take a clam in his fore paws, whack it a few times on the rock till the shell cracked, then open it with his teeth and devour the morsel inside. He ate leisurely, tasting each clam critically before swallowing, and sitting up often to wash his whiskers



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or to look out over the lake. A hermit thrush sang marvelously sweet above him; the twilight colors glowed deep and deeper in the water below, where his shadow was clearly eating clams also, in the midst of heaven's splendor. — Altogether a pretty scene, and a moment of peace that I still love to remember. I quite forgot that Musquash is a villain.

But the tragedy was near, as it always is in the wilderness. Suddenly a movement caught my eye on the bank above. Something was waving nervously under the bushes. Before I could make out what it was, there was a fearful rush, a gleam of wild yellow eyes, a squeak from the muskrat. Then Upweekis, looking gaunt and strange in his summer coat, was crouched on the rock with Musquash between his great paws, growling fiercely as he cracked the bones. He bit his game all over, to make sure that it was quite dead, then took it by the neck, glided into the bushes with his stub tail twitching, and became a shadow again.





Another time I was perched up in a lodged tree, some twenty feet from the ground, watching a big bait of fish which I had put in an open spot for anything that might choose to come and get it. I was hoping for a bear, and so climbed above the ground that he might not get my scent, should he come from leeward. It was early autumn, and my intentions were wholly peaceable. I had no weapon of any kind.

Late in the afternoon something took to chasing a red squirrel near me. I heard them scurrying through the trees, but could see nothing. The chase passed out of hearing, and I had almost forgotten it, for something was moving in the underbrush near my bait, when back it came with a rush. The squirrel, half dead with fright, leaped from a spruce tip to the ground, jumped to the tree in which I sat, and raced up the incline to my feet before seeing me, when he sprang to a branch and sat chattering hysterically between two fears. After him came a pine marten, following swiftly, catching the scent of his game, not from the bark



or the ground, but apparently from the air. Scarcely had he jumped upon my tree when there was a screech and a rush in the underbrush just below him, and out of the bushes came a young lynx to join in the chase. He missed the marten on the ground, but sprang to my tree like a flash. I remember that the only sound I was conscious of at the time was the ripping of his nails in the dead bark. He had been seeking my bait undoubtedly—it was a good lynx country, and Upweekis loves fish like a cat—when the chase passed under his nose and he joined it on the instant.

Halfway up the incline the marten smelled me, or was terrified by the noise behind him, and leaped aside. A branch upon which I was leaning swayed or snapped, and the lucivee stopped as if struck, crouching lower and lower against the tree, his big, yellow, expressionless eyes glaring straight into mine. A moment only he stood the steady look; then his eyes wavered; he turned his head, leaped for the underbrush, and was gone.

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Another moment, and Meeko the squirrel had forgotten his fright and peril and everything else save his curiosity to find out who I was and all about me. He had to pass quite close to me to get to another tree, but anything was better than going back where the marten might be waiting; so he was presently over my head, snickering and barking to make me move, and scolding me soundly for disturbing the peace of the woods.

In summer Upweekis is a solitary creature, rearing his young on the wildest burned lands, where game is plenty and where it is almost impossible to find him, except by accident. In winter also he roams alone for the most part; but occasionally, when rabbits are scarce, as they are periodically in the northern woods, he gathers in small bands for the purpose of pulling down big game that he would never attack singly. Generally Upweekis is skulking and cowardly with man; but when driven by hunger or when hunting in bands, he is a savage beast and must be followed cautiously.



I had heard much of the fierceness of these hunting bands from settlers and hunters; and once a friend of mine, an old backwoodsman, had a narrow escape from them. He had a dog, Grip, a big brindled cur, of whose prowess in killing "varmints" he was always bragging, calling him the best "lucifer" dog in all Canada. Lucifer, by the way, is a local name for the lynx on the upper St. John, where Grip and his master lived.

One day the master missed a young heifer and went on his trail, with Grip and his axe for companions. Presently he came to lynx tracks, then to signs of a struggle, then plump upon six or seven of the big cats snarling savagely over the body of the heifer. Grip, the lucifer dog, rushed in blindly, and in two minutes was torn to ribbons. Then the lynxes came creeping and snarling towards the man, who backed away, shouting and swinging his axe. He killed one by a lucky blow, as it sprang for his chest. The others drove him to his own door; but he would never have reached it, so he told me, but for a long strip of open land that he had cleared

back into the woods. He would face and charge the beasts, which seemed more afraid of his voice than of the axe, then run desperately to keep them from circling and getting between him and safety. When he reached the open strip they followed a little way along the edges of the underbrush, but returned, one at a time, when they were sure he had no further mind to disturb their feast or their fighting.

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It is curious that, when Upweekis and his hunting pack pull down game in this way, the first thing they do is to fight over it. There may be meat enough and to spare, but under their fearful hunger is the old beastly instinct for each one to grab all for himself; so they fall promptly to teeth and claws before the game is dead. The fightings at such times are savage affairs, both to the eye and ear. One forgets that Upweekis is a shadow, and thinks that he must be a fiend.

One day in winter, when after caribou, I came upon a very large lynx track, the largest I have ever seen. It was two days

old; but it led in my direction, toward the caribou barrens, and I followed it to see what I should see.



Presently it joined four other lynx trails; and a mile farther on all five trails went forward in great flying leaps, each lynx leaving a hole in the snow as big as a bucket at every jump. A hundred yards of this kind of traveling and the trails joined another trail,—that of a wounded caribou from the barrens. His tracks showed that he had been traveling with difficulty on three legs. Here was a place where he had stood to listen; and there was another place where even untrained eyes might see that he had plunged forward with a start of fear. It was a silent story, but full of eager interest in every detail.

The lucivee tracks now showed different tactics. They crossed and crisscrossed the trail, appearing now in front, now behind, now on either side the wounded bull, evidently closing in upon him warily. Here and there was a depression in the snow where one had crouched, growling, as the game passed. Then the struggle began.



The stripped carcass of the caribou with two lynxes still upon it

First, there was a trampled place in the snow where the bull had taken a stand and the big cats went creeping about him, waiting for a chance to spring all together. He broke away from that, but the three-legged gallop speedily exhausted him. Only when he trots is a caribou tireless. The lynxes followed; the deadly cat-play began again. First one, then another leaped, only to be shaken off; then two, then all five were upon the poor brute, which still struggled forward. The record was written red all over the snow.

As I followed it cautiously, a snarl sounded just ahead. I kicked off my snowshoes and circled noiselessly to the left, so as to look out over a little opening. There lay the stripped carcass of the caribou with two lynxes still upon it, growling fearfully at each other as they pulled at the bones. Another lynx crouched in the snow, under a bush, watching the scene. Two others circled about each other snarling, looking for an opening, but too well fed to care for a fight just then. Two or three foxes, a pine





marten, and a fisher moved ceaselessly in and out, sniffing hungrily, and waiting for a chance to seize every scrap of bone or skin that was left unguarded for an instant. Above them a dozen moose birds kept the same watch vigilantly. As I stole nearer, hoping to get behind an old log where I could lie and watch the spectacle, some creature scurried out of the underbrush at one side. I was watching the movement, when a loud *kee-yaaah!* startled me; I whirled towards the opening. From behind the log a fierce round head with tasseled ears rose up, and the big lynx, whose trail I had first followed, sprang into sight snarling and spitting viciously.

The feast stopped at the first alarm. The marten disappeared instantly. The foxes and the fisher and one lynx slunk away. Another, which I had not seen, stalked up to the carcass and put his fore paws upon it, and turned his savage head in my direction. Evidently other lynxes had come in to the kill beside the five I had followed. Then all the big cats crouched in the snow and

stared at me steadily out of their wild yellow eyes.

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It was only for a moment. The big lynx on my side of the log was in a fighting temper; he snarled continuously. Another sprang over the log and crouched beside him, facing me. Then began a curious scene, of which I could not wait to see the end. The two lynxes hitched nearer and nearer to where I stood motionless, watching. They would creep forward a step or two, then crouch in the snow, like a cat warming her feet, and stare at me unblinkingly for a few moments. Then another hitch or two, which brought them nearer, and another stare. I could not look at one steadily, to make him waver; for the moment my eyes were upon him the others hitched closer; and already two more lynxes were coming over the log. I had to draw the curtain hastily with a bullet between the yellow eyes of the biggest lynx, and a second straight into the chest of his fellow-starer, just as he wriggled down into the snow for a spring. The others had leaped away snarling



as the first heavy report rolled through the woods.



Another time, in the same region, a solitary lynx made me uncomfortable for half an afternoon. It was Sunday, and I had gone for a snowshoe tramp, leaving my rifle behind me. On the way back to camp I stopped for a caribou head and skin, which I had *cached* on the edge of a barren the morning before. The weather had changed; a bitter cold wind blew after me as I turned toward camp. I carried the head with its branching antlers on my shoulder; the skin hung down, to keep my back warm, its edges trailing in the snow.

Gradually I became convinced that something was following me; but I turned several times without seeing anything. "It is only a fisher," I thought, and kept on steadily, instead of going back to examine my trail; for I was hoping thus to catch a glimpse of the cunning creature, whose trail you find so often running side by side with your own, and who follows you, if you have any trace of game about you, hour after hour through

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the wilderness, without ever showing himself in the light. Then I whirled suddenly, obeying an impulse; and there was Upweekis, a big, savage-looking fellow, just gliding up on my trail in plain sight, following the broad snowshoe track and the scent of the fresh caribou skin without difficulty, poor trailer though he be.

He stopped and sat down on his feet, as a lucivee generally does when you surprise him, and stared at me steadily. When I went on again I knew that he was after me, though he had disappeared from the trail.

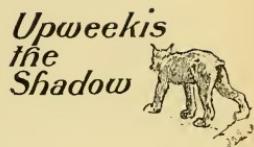
Then began a double-quick of four miles, the object being to reach camp before night should fall and give the lucivee the advantage. It was already late enough to make one a bit uneasy. He knew that I was hurrying; he grew bolder, showing himself openly on the trail behind me. I turned into an old swamping road, which gave me a bit of open before and behind. Then I saw him occasionally on either side, or crouching half hid until I passed. Clearly he was waiting for night; but to this day I am not



sure whether it was the man or the caribou skin upon which he had set his heart. The scent of flesh and blood was in his nose, and he was too hungry to control himself much longer.

I cut a good club with my big jack-knife and, watching my chance, threw off the caribou head and jumped for him as he crouched in the snow. He leaped aside untouched, but crouched again instantly, showing all his teeth, snarling horribly. Three times I swung at him warily. Each time he jumped aside and watched for his opening; but I kept the club in play before his eyes, and it was not yet dark enough. Then I yelled in his face, to teach him fear, and went on again.

Near camp I shouted for Simmo to bring my rifle; but he was slow in understanding, and his answering shout alarmed the savage creature near me. His movements became instantly more wary, more hidden. He left the open trail; and once, when I saw him well behind me, his head was raised high, listening. I threw down the caribou head to keep him busy, and ran for camp. In a



few minutes I was stealing back again with my rifle; but Upweekis had felt the change in the situation and was again among the shadows, where he belongs. I lost his trail in the darkening woods.

There was another lynx which showed me, one day, a different side to Upweekis' nature. It was in summer, when every animal in the wilderness seems an altogether different creature from the one you knew last winter, with new habits, new duties, new pleasures, and even a new coat to hide him better from his enemies.

Opposite my island camp, where I halted a little while in a summer's roving, was the best cover for game that I have ever found in the wilderness. Years ago the fire had swept over it; now it was a perfect tangle, with sunny open spots here and there, where berries grew by handfuls. Rabbits swarmed there, and grouse were plenty. As it was forty miles back from the settlements, it seemed a perfect place for Upweekis to make a den in. And so it was. I have no doubt there were a dozen litters of kittens on

that two miles of ridge; but the cover was so dense that nothing smaller than a deer could be seen moving.



For two weeks I hunted the ridge whenever I was not fishing, stealing in and out among the thickets, depending more upon ears than eyes, but seeing nothing of Upweekis, save here and there a trampled fern, or a blood-splashed leaf, with a bit of rabbit fur, or a great round cat track, to tell the story. Once I came upon a bear and two cubs among the berries; and once, when the wind was blowing down the hill, I walked almost up to a bull caribou without seeing him. He was watching my approach curiously, only his horns showing above the tangle where he stood. Down in the coverts it was always intensely still, with a stillness that I took good care not to break. So when the great brute whirled, with a snort and a tremendous crash of bushes, almost under my nose, it raised my hair for a moment, not knowing what the creature was, nor which way he was heading. But though every day brought its experience, and its knowledge,

and its new wonder at the ways of wild things, I found no trace of the den, nor of the kittens I had hoped to watch. All animals are silent near their little ones, so there was never a cry by night or day to guide me.

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*Upweekis
the
Shadow*



Late one afternoon, when I had climbed to the top of the ridge and was on my way back to camp, I ran into an odor,—the strong, disagreeable odor that always hovers about the den of a carnivorous animal. I followed it through a thicket, and came to an open stony place, with a sharp drop of five or six feet to dense cover below. The odor came from this cover, so I jumped down; when—*yeow, karrrr, pft-pft!* Almost under my feet a gray thing leaped away snarling, followed by another. I had the merest glimpse of them; but from the way they bristled and spit and arched their backs, I knew that I had stumbled upon a pair of the lynx kittens, for which I had searched so long in vain.

They had, probably, been lying out on the warm stones, until, hearing strange footsteps,

they glided away to cover. When I crashed down near them they had been scared into showing their temper; else I had never seen them in the underbrush. Fortunately for me, the fierce old mother was away. Had she been there, I should have had more serious business on hand than watching her kittens.

They had not seen more of me than my shoes and stockings; so when I stole after them, to see what they were like, they were waiting under a bush to see what I was like. They jumped away again, spitting, without seeing me, alarmed by the rustle which I could not avoid making in the cover. So I followed them, just a quiver of leaves here, a snarl there, and then a rush away, until they doubled back towards the rocky place, where, parting the underbrush cautiously, I saw a dark hole among the rocks of a little opening. The roots of an upturned tree arched over the hole, making a broad doorway. In this doorway stood two half-grown lucivees, fuzzy and gray and savage-looking, their backs still up, their wild eyes turned



in my direction apprehensively. Seeing me, they drew farther back into the den, and I saw nothing more of them save, now and then, their round heads, or the fire in their yellow eyes.

It was too late for further observation that day. The fierce old mother lynx would presently be back; they would let her know of the intruder in some way; and they would all keep close in the den. I found a place, some dozen yards above, where it would be possible to watch them, marked the spot by a blasted stub, to which I made a compass of broken twigs; and then went back to camp.

Next morning I omitted the early fishing, and was back at the place before the sun looked over the ridge. Their den was all quiet, in deep shadow. Mother Lynx was away on the early hunting. I intended to kill her when she came back. My rifle lay ready across my knees. Then I would watch the kittens a little while, and kill them also. I wanted their skins, all soft and fine with their first fur. And they were too big and



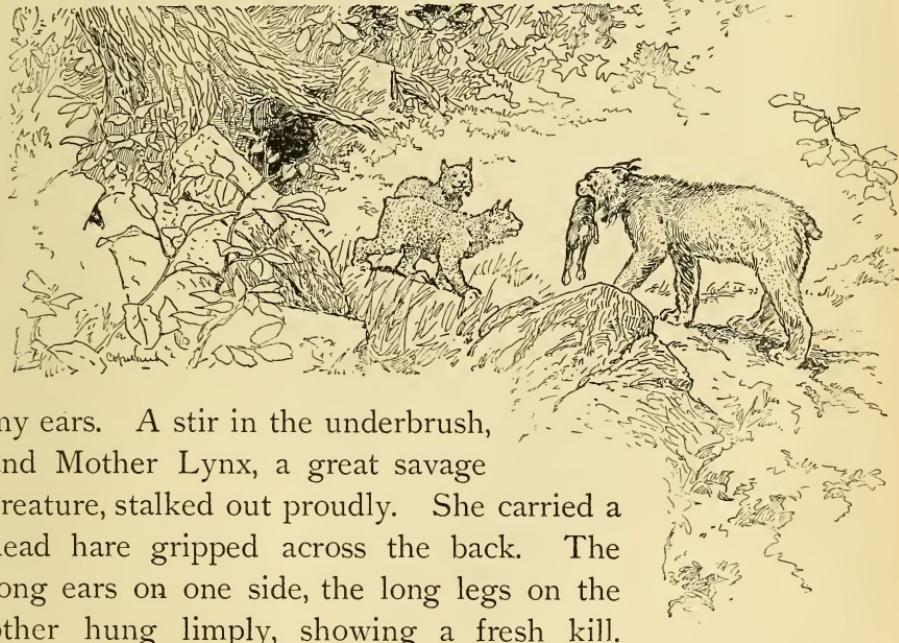
fierce to think of taking them alive. My vacation was over. Simmo was already packing up, to break camp that morning. So there would be no time to carry out my long-cherished plan of watching young lynxes at play, as I had before watched young foxes and bears and owls and fish-hawks, and indeed almost everything, except Upweekis, in the wilderness.

Presently one of the lucivees came out, yawned, stretched, raised himself against a root. In the morning stillness I could hear the cut and rip of his claws on the wood. We call the action sharpening the claws; but it is only the occasional exercise of the fine flexor muscles that a cat uses so seldom, yet must use powerfully when the time comes. The second lucivee came out of the shadow a moment later and leaped upon the fallen tree, where he could better watch the hillside below. For half an hour or more, while I waited expectantly, both animals moved restlessly about the den, or climbed over the roots and trunk of the fallen tree. They were plainly cross; they made no attempt at



play, but kept well away from each other, with a wholesome respect for teeth and claws and temper. Breakfast hour was long past, evidently, and they were hungry.

Suddenly one, who was at that moment watching from the tree trunk, leaped down; the second joined him, and both paced back and forth excitedly. They had heard the sounds of a coming that were too fine for



my ears. A stir in the underbrush, and Mother Lynx, a great savage creature, stalked out proudly. She carried a dead hare gripped across the back. The long ears on one side, the long legs on the other hung limply, showing a fresh kill.



She walked to the doorway of her den, crossed it back and forth two or three times, still carrying the hare as if the lust of blood were raging within her and she could not drop her prey even to her own little ones, which followed her hungrily, one on either side. Once, as she turned toward me, one of the kittens seized a leg of the hare and jerked it savagely. The mother whirled on him, growling deep down in her throat; the youngster backed away, scared but snarling. At last she flung the game down. The kittens fell upon it like furies, growling at each other, as I had seen the stranger lynxes growling, once before, over the caribou. In a moment they had torn the carcass apart and were crouched, each one over his piece, gnawing like a cat over a rat, and stuffing themselves greedily, in utter forgetfulness of the mother lynx, who lay under a bush some distance away and watched them.

In a half hour the savage meal was over. The little ones sat up, licked their chops, and began to tongue their broad paws. The



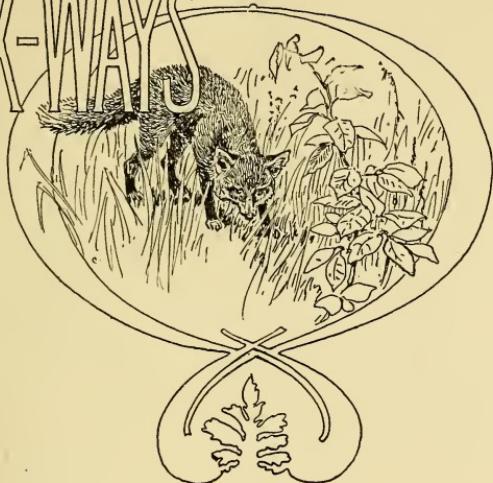
mother had been blinking sleepily; now she rose and came to her young. A change had come over the family. The kittens ran to meet the dam as if they had not seen her before, rubbing softly against her legs, or sitting up to rub their whiskers against hers — a tardy thanks for the breakfast she had provided. The fierce old mother, too, seemed altogether different. She arched her back against the roots, purring loudly, while the little ones arched and purred against her sides. Then she bent her savage head and licked them fondly with her tongue, while they rubbed as close to her as they could get, passing between her legs as under a bridge, and trying to lick her face in return; till all three tongues were going at once and the family lay down together.

It was time to kill them now. The rifle lay ready. But a change had come over the watcher too. Hitherto he had seen Upweekis as a ferocious brute, whom it was good to kill. This was altogether different. Upweekis could be gentle, it seemed, and give herself for her little ones. And a bit of



tenderness, like that which lay so unconscious under my eyes, gets hold of a man, and spikes his guns better than moralizing. So the watcher stole away, making as little noise as possible, following his compass of twigs to where the canoes lay ready and Simmo was waiting.

Fox-Ways



III

FOX-WAYS



ID you ever meet a fox face to face, surprising him quite as much as yourself? If so, you were deeply impressed, no doubt, by his perfect dignity and self-possession. Here is how the meeting generally comes about.—

It is a late winter afternoon. You are swinging rapidly over the upland pastures, or loitering along the winding old road through the woods. The color deepens in the west; the pines grow black against it; the rich brown of the oak leaves seems to glow everywhere in the last soft light; and the mystery, that never sleeps long in the woods, begins to rustle again in the thickets. You are busy with your own thoughts, seeing nothing, till a flash of yellow passes before your eyes, and a fox stands in the



path before you, one foot uplifted, the fluffy brush swept aside in graceful curve, the bright eyes looking straight into yours—nay, looking through them, to read the intent which gives the eyes their expression. That is always the way with a fox; he seems to be looking at your thoughts.

Surprise, eagerness, a lively curiosity are all in your face on the instant; but the beautiful creature before you draws himself together with quiet self-possession. Your curiosity seems to him vulgar, and he will have none of it. Dropping his head, he turns to the left, English fashion, and trots slowly past you. There is no hurry; not the shadow of suspicion or uneasiness. His eyes are cast down; his brow wrinkled, as if in deep thought; already he seems to have forgotten your existence. You watch him curiously as he re-enters the path behind you and disappears over the hill. Somehow a queer feeling, half wonder, half rebuke, steals over you; as if you had been outdone in courtesy, or had passed a gentleman without sufficiently recognizing him.



Ah, but you did not watch sharply enough ! You did not see, as he circled past, that cunning side gleam of his yellow eyes, which understood your attitude perfectly. Had you stirred, he would have vanished like a flash. You did not run to the top of the hill where he disappeared, to see that burst of speed the instant he was out of your sight. You did not see the capers, the tail-chasing, the high jumps, the quick turns and plays ; and then the straight, nervous gallop, which told more plainly than words his exultation, in that he had outwitted you and shown his superiority.

Reynard, wherever you meet him, impresses you as an animal of dignity and calculation. He never seems surprised, much less frightened; never loses his head; never does things hurriedly, on the spur of the moment, as a scatter-brained rabbit or meddling squirrel might do. You meet him as he leaves the warm rock on the south slope of the old oak woods, where he has been curled up asleep all the winter afternoon. Now he is off on his nightly hunt; he is trotting along,

head down, brows wrinkled, planning it all out.—

Fox-Ways



“Let me see,” he is thinking, “last night I hunted the Draper woods. To-night I’ll cross the brook and take a look into that pasture-corner, among the junipers. There’s a rabbit that plays round there on moonlight nights; I’ll have him presently. Then I’ll go down to the big South meadow after mice. I have n’t been there for a week; and last time I got six. If I don’t find mice, there’s that chicken coop of old Jenkins. Only”— He stops, with his foot up, and listens as the far-away bark of a dog floats in through the woods—“only he locks the coop and leaves the dog loose ever since I took the big rooster. Anyway I’ll take a look round there. Sometimes Deacon Jones’s hens get to roosting in the next orchard. If I can find them up an apple tree, I’ll bring a couple down with a good trick I know. On the way— Hi, there!”

In the midst of his planning he gives a grasshopper-jump aside, and brings both paws down hard on a bit of green moss that

quivered as he passed. He spreads his paws cautiously; thrusts his nose between them; drags a young wood mouse from under the moss; eats him; licks his chops twice, and goes on planning as if nothing had happened.

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"On the way back, I'll swing round by the Fales place, and take a sniff under the wall by the old hickory, to see if those sleepy skunks are still there for the winter. I'll have that whole family before spring, if I'm hungry and can't find anything else. They come out on sunny days; all you have to do is just hide behind the hickory and watch."

So off he goes on his well-planned hunt; and if you follow his track to-morrow in the snow, you will see how he has gone from one hunting ground directly to the next. You will find the depression where he lay in a clump of tall dead grass and watched a while for the rabbit; reckon the number of mice he caught in the meadow; see his sly tracks about the chicken coop, and in the orchard; and pause a moment at the spot where he cast a knowing look behind the

hickory by the wall,—all just as he planned it on his way to the brook.

Fox-Ways



If you stand by one of his runways while the dogs are driving him, expecting to see him come tearing along in a desperate hurry, frightened out of half his wits by the savage uproar behind him, you can only rub your eyes in wonder when a fluffy yellow ball comes drifting through the woods towards you, as if the breeze were blowing it along. There he is, trotting down the runway in the same leisurely, self-possessed way, wrapped in his own thoughts, apparently, the same deep wrinkles over his eyes. He played a trick or two on a brook, down between the ponds, by jumping about on a lot of stones from which the snow had melted, without wetting his feet (which he dislikes), and without leaving a track anywhere. While the dogs are puzzling that out, he has plenty of time to plan more devices on his way to the big hill, with its brook, and old walls, and rail fences, and dry places under the pines, and twenty other helps to an active brain.



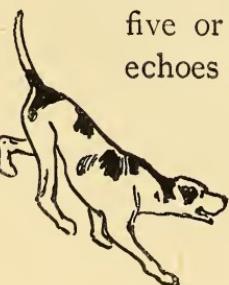
First he will run round the hill half a dozen times, crisscrossing his trail. That of itself will drive the young dogs crazy. Then along the top rail of a fence, and a long jump into the junipers, which hold no scent, and another jump to the wall where there is no snow, and then —

“Oh, plenty of time, no hurry!” he says to himself, turning to listen a moment. “That dog with the big voice must be old Roby. He thinks he knows all about foxes, just because he broke his leg last year, trying to walk a sheep-fence where I’d been. I’ll just creep up the other side of the hill, and curl up on a warm rock and watch them all break their heads over that crisscross.”

So he trots past you, still planning; crosses the wall by a certain stone, that he has used ever since he was a cub fox; seems to float across an old pasture, stopping only to run about a bit among some cow tracks, to kill the scent; and so on towards his big hill. Before he gets there he will have a skilful retreat planned, back to the ponds, in case old Roby untangles his crisscross, or some

young hound circles too near the rock whereon he sits, watching the game.

Fox-Ways



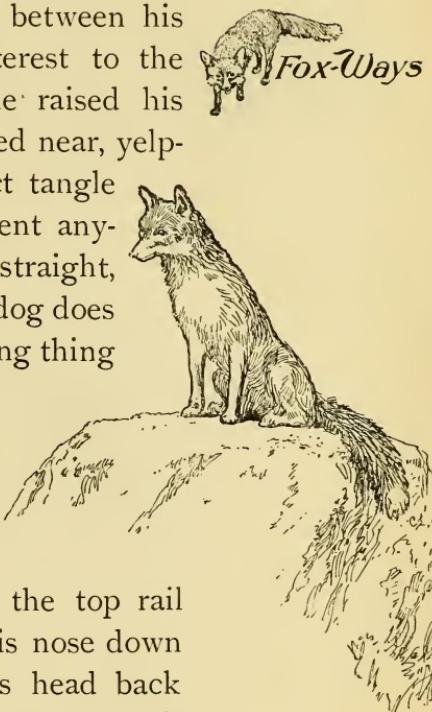
If you meet him now you will see no quiet assumption of superiority; he knows too well what it means to be met on a runway by a man with a gun when the dogs are driving. With your slightest movement there is a flash of yellow fur, and he has vanished into the thickest bit of underbrush at hand.—Don't run; you will not see him again here. He knows the old roads and paths far better than you do, and can reach his big hill by any one of a dozen routes where you would never dream of looking. But if you want another glimpse of him, take the shortest cut to the hill. He may take a nap, or sit and listen a while to the dogs, or run round a swamp before he gets there. Sit on the wall in plain sight; make a post of yourself; keep still, and keep your eyes open.

Once, in just such a place, I had a rare chance to watch him. It was on the summit of a great bare hill. Down in the woods five or six hounds were waking the winter echoes merrily on a fresh trail. I was hoping



for a sight of Reynard when he appeared from nowhere, on a rock not fifty yards away. There he lay, his nose between his paws, listening with quiet interest to the uproar below. Occasionally he raised his head as some young dog scurried near, yelping maledictions upon a perfect tangle of fox tracks, none of which went anywhere. Suddenly he sat up straight, twisted his head sideways, as a dog does when he sees the most interesting thing of his life, dropped his tongue out a bit, and looked intently. I looked too, and there, just below, was old Roby, the best foxhound in a dozen counties, creeping like a cat along the top rail of a sheep-fence, now putting his nose down to the wood, now throwing his head back for a great howl of exultation.—It was all immensely entertaining; and nobody seemed to be enjoying it more than the fox.

One of the most fascinating bits of animal study is to begin at the very beginning of fox education. Find a fox den, and go there





some afternoon in early June, and hide at a distance, where you can watch the entrance through your field-glass. Every afternoon the young foxes come out to play in the sunshine, like so many kittens. Bright little bundles of yellow fur they seem, full of tricks and whims, with pointed faces that change only from exclamation to interrogation points. For hours at a stretch they roll about, and chase tails, and pounce upon the quiet old mother with fierce little barks. One climbs laboriously up the rock behind the den, and sits on his tail, gravely surveying the great landscape with a comical little air of importance, as if he owned it all. When called to come down he is afraid, and makes a great to-do about it. Another has been crouching for five minutes behind a tuft of grass, watching like a cat for some one to come by and be pounced upon. A third is worrying something on the ground—a cricket, or a doodle-bug; and the fourth never ceases to worry the patient old mother, till she moves away and lies down by herself in the shadow of a ground cedar.

As the afternoon wears away, and long shadows come creeping up the hillside, the mother rises suddenly and goes back to the den; the little ones stop their play and gather about her. You strain your ears for the slightest sound, but hear nothing; yet there she is, plainly talking to them; and they are listening. She turns her head, and the cubs scamper into the den's mouth. A moment she stands listening, looking; while, just within the dark entrance, you get glimpses of four pointed black noses and a cluster of bright little eyes, wide open for a last look. Then she trots away, planning her hunt, till she disappears down by the brook. When she is gone, eyes and noses draw back; only a dark silent hole in the bank is left. You will not see them again; not unless you stay to watch by moonlight till Mother Fox comes back, with a fringe of field mice hanging from her lips, or a young turkey thrown across her shoulders.

If you watch day after day, you may discover a bit of rare shrewdness on the part of Mother Fox: she never troubles the poultry





of the farms nearest her den. She will forage for miles in every direction; will harass the chickens of distant farms till scarcely a handful remains of those that wander into the woods, or sleep in the open yards; yet she will pass by and through nearer farms without turning aside to hunt, except for mice and frogs; and, even when hungry, will note a flock of chickens within sight of her den, and leave them undisturbed. She seems to know perfectly that a few missing chickens will lead to a search; that boys' eyes will speedily find her den, and boys' hands dig eagerly for a litter of young foxes.

Curiously enough, the cubs, for whose peaceful bringing-up the mother so cunningly provides, do not imitate her caution. They begin their hunting by lying in ambush about the nearest farm; the first stray chicken they see is game. Once they begin to plunder in this way, and feed full on their own hunting, parental authority is gone; the mother deserts the den immediately, leading the cubs far away. But some of them go

back, contrary to all advice, and pay the penalty. Sooner or later some cub is caught stealing chickens in broad daylight, and is chased by dogs. The foolish youngster takes to earth, instead of trusting to his legs; so the long-concealed den is discovered and dug open at last.

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When an old fox, foraging for her young at night, discovers by her keen nose that a flock of hens has been straying near the woods, she goes next day and hides herself there, lying motionless for hours at a stretch in a clump of dead grass or berry bushes, till the flock comes near enough for a rush. Then she hurls herself among them, and in the confusion seizes one by the neck, throws it by a quick twist across her shoulders, and is gone before the stupid hens find out what it is all about.

But when a fox finds an old hen or turkey straying about with a brood of chicks, then the tactics are altogether different. Creeping up like a cat, the fox watches an opportunity to seize a chick out of sight of the mother bird. That done, he withdraws,



silent as a shadow, his grip on the chick's neck preventing any outcry. Hiding his game at a distance, he creeps back to capture another in the same way; and so on till he has enough, or till he is discovered, or some half-strangled chick finds breath enough for a squawk. A hen or turkey knows the danger by instinct, and hurries her brood into the open at the first suspicion that a fox is watching.

A farmer first told me how a fox manages to carry a number of chicks at once. He heard a clamor from a hen-turkey and her brood one day, and ran to a wood path in time to see a vixen make off with a turkey chick scarcely larger than a robin. Several were missing from the brood. He hunted about, and presently found five more, just killed. They were beautifully laid out, the bodies at a broad angle, the necks crossing each other, like the corner of a corn-cob house, in such a way that, by gripping the necks at the angle, all the chicks could be carried at once, half hanging at either side of the fox's mouth. Since then I have seen

an old fox with what looked like a dozen or more field mice carried in this way; only, of course, the tails were crossed corn-cob fashion instead of the necks.

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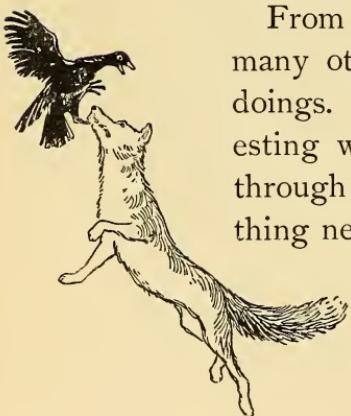
The stealthiness with which a fox stalks his game is most remarkable. Stupid chickens are not the only birds captured. Once I read in the snow the story of his hunt after a crow—wary game to be caught napping! The tracks showed that a flock of crows had been walking about an old field, bordered by pine and birch thickets. From the rock where he was sleeping away the afternoon the fox saw or heard them, and crept down. How cautious he was about it! Following the tracks, one could almost see him stealing along from stone to bush, from bush to grass clump, so low that his body pushed a deep trail in the snow, till he reached the cover of a low pine on the very edge of the field. There he crouched with all four feet close together under him. Then a crow came by within ten feet of the ambush. The tracks showed that the bird was a bit suspicious; he stopped often to look and listen. When



his head was turned aside for an instant the fox launched himself; just two jumps, and he had him. Quick as he was, the wing marks showed that the crow had started, and was pulled down out of the air. Reynard carried him into the densest thicket he could find, and there ate him.

A strong enmity exists between crows and foxes. Whenever Reynard ventures abroad by day, the crows are sure to find and chase him with noisy clatter, which he detests, till he creeps into a thicket of scrub pines, into which no crow will ever venture, and lies down there till he tires out their patience. In hunting, one may frequently trace the exact course of a fox, which the dogs are driving, by the crows clamoring over him. Here in the snow was a record that may help explain one side of the feud.

From the same white page one may read many other stories of Reynard's ways and doings. Indeed, I know of no more interesting winter walk than to follow his trail through the soft snow. There is always something new, either in the track or the woods



through which it leads; always a fresh hunting story; always a disappointment or two, a long cold wait for a rabbit that did not come, or a miscalculation over the length of the snow tunnel where a partridge burrowed for the night. Generally, if you follow far enough, there is also a story of good hunting, which leaves you wavering between congratulation over a successful stalk, after nights of patient, hungry wandering, and pity for the little tragedy told so vividly by converging trails, a few red drops in the snow, a bit of fur blown about by the wind, or a feather clinging listlessly to the underbrush. In such a tramp one learns much of fox-ways and other ways that can never be learned elsewhere.

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The fox whose life has been spent on the hillsides near a New England village seems to have profited by generations of experience. He is much more cunning than the fox of the wilderness. If, for instance, a fox has been stealing your chickens, your trap must be very cunningly set if you are to catch



him. It will not do to set it near the chickens; no inducement will be great enough to bring him within yards of it. It must be set well back in the woods, near one of his regular hunting grounds. Before that, however, you must bait the fox with choice bits scattered over a pile of dry leaves or chaff, sometimes for a week, sometimes for a month, till he comes regularly. Then smoke your trap, or scent it; handle it only with gloves; set it in the chaff; scatter bait as usual; and you have one chance of getting him, while he has still a dozen of getting away. In the wilderness, on the other hand, he may be caught with half the precaution. I know a little fellow, whose home is far back from the settlements, who catches five or six foxes every winter by ordinary wire snares set in the rabbit paths, where foxes love to hunt.

In the wilderness one often finds tracks in the snow, telling how a fox tried to catch a partridge and only succeeded in frightening it into a tree. After watching a while hungrily,—one can almost see him

licking his chops under the tree,—he trots off to other hunting grounds. If he were an educated fox he would know better than that.

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When an old New England fox, in some of his nightly prowlings, discovers a flock of chickens roosting in the orchard, he generally gets one or two. His plan is to come by moonlight, or else just at dusk, and bark sharply to attract the chickens' attention. If near the house, he does this by jumping, lest the dog or the farmer hear his barking. When the chickens begin to flutter and cackle, as they always do when disturbed, he circles the tree slowly, jumping and clacking his teeth. The chickens crane their necks down to follow him. Faster and faster he goes, racing in small circles, till some foolish fowl grows dizzy with twisting her head, or loses her balance and tumbles down, only to be snapped up and carried off across his shoulders in a twinkling.

But there is one way in which fox of the wilderness and fox of the town are alike easily deceived. Both are very fond of mice,



and respond quickly to the squeak, which can be imitated perfectly by drawing the breath in sharply between closed lips. The next thing, after that is learned, is to find a spot in which to try the effect.

Two or three miles back from all New England towns are certain old pastures and clearings, long since run wild, in which young foxes love to meet and play on moonlight nights, just as rabbits do. When well fed, and therefore in no hurry to hunt, the heart of a young fox turns naturally to fun and capers. The playground may easily be found by following the tracks after the first snowfall. If one goes to the place on some still, bright night in autumn, and hides on the edge of the open, he stands a good chance of seeing two or three foxes playing there. Only he must himself be still as the night; else, should twenty foxes come that way, he will never see one.

It is always a pretty scene, the quiet opening in the woods flecked with soft gray shadows in the moonlight, the dark sentinel evergreens keeping silent watch about the

place, the wild little creatures playing about among the junipers, flitting through light and shadow, jumping over each other and tumbling about in mimic warfare, all unconscious of a spectator as the foxes that played there before the white man came, and before the Indians. Such scenes do not crowd themselves upon one. He must wait long, and love the woods, and be often disappointed; but when they come at last, they are worth all the love and the watching. And when the foxes fail, there is always something else that is beautiful.—

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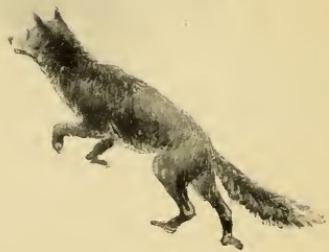
Now squeak like a mouse, in the midst of the play. Instantly the fox nearest you stands, with one foot up, listening. Another squeak, and he makes three or four swift bounds in your direction, only to stand listening again; he has not quite located you. Careful now! don't hurry; the longer you keep him waiting, the more certainly he is deceived. Another squeak; some more swift jumps that bring him within ten feet; and now he smells or sees you, sitting motionless on your boulder in the shadow of the pines.



However surprised he is, he shows no sign of it; he only looks you over indifferently, as if he were used to finding people sitting on that particular rock. Then he trots off with an air of having forgotten something. With all his cunning he never suspects you of being the mouse. That little creature he believes to be hiding under the rock; and to-morrow night he will take a look there, or respond to your squeak in the same way.

It is only early in the season, generally before the snow blows, that one can see them playing. Later in the season — either because the cubs have lost their playfulness, or because they must hunt diligently for enough to eat — they seldom do more than take a gallop together, with a playful jump or two, before going their separate ways. At all times, however, they have a strong tendency to fun and mischief-making. More than once, in winter, I have surprised a fox flying round after his own bushy tail so rapidly that tail and fox together looked like a great yellow pin-wheel on the snow.

When a fox meets a toad or frog, and is



He only looks you over indifferently

not hungry, he worries the poor thing for an hour at a time; and when he finds a turtle he turns the creature over with his paw, sitting down gravely to watch its awkward struggle to get back upon its feet. At such times he has a most humorous expression, brows wrinkled and tongue out, as if he were enjoying himself hugely.

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Later in the season he would be glad enough to make a meal of toad or turtle. One day in March the sun shone out bright and warm; in the afternoon the first frogs began to tune up, *crr-r-r-runk*, *crr-r-runk-a-runk-runk*, like a flock of brant in the distance. I was watching them at a marshy spot in the woods, where they had come out of the mud by dozens into a bit of open water, when the bushes parted cautiously and the sharp nose of a fox appeared. The hungry fellow had heard them from the hill above, where he was asleep, and had come down to see if he could catch a few. He was creeping out on the ice when he smelled me, and trotted back into the woods.

Once I saw him catch a frog. He crept



down to where Chigwooltz, a fat green bull-frog, was sunning himself by a lily pad, and very cautiously stretched out one paw under water. Then, with a quick fling, he tossed his game to land, and was after him like a flash before he could scramble back.

On the seacoast Reynard depends largely on the tides for a living. An old fisherman assures me that he has seen him catching crabs there in a novel way. Finding a quiet bit of water where the crabs are swimming about, he trails his brush over the surface till one rises and seizes it with his claw (a most natural thing for a crab to do), whereupon the fox springs away, jerking the crab to land. Though a fox is careful as a cat about wetting his tail or feet, I shall not be surprised to find some day for myself that the fisherman was right.

His way of beguiling a duck is more remarkable than his fishing. Late one afternoon, while following the shore of a pond, I noticed a commotion among some tame ducks, and stopped to see what it was about. They were swimming in circles, quacking and

stretching their wings, in great excitement. As I glanced over the bank something slipped out of sight into the tall grass. My eyes followed the waving tops intently, and I caught one sure glimpse of a fox as he disappeared into the woods.

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The thing puzzled me for years, though I suspected some foxy trick, till a duck-hunter explained to me what Reynard was doing. He had seen it tried successfully on a flock of wild ducks.—

When a fox finds a flock of ducks feeding near shore, he trots down and begins to play on the beach. Ducks are full of curiosity, especially about unusual colors and objects too small to frighten them; the playing animal speedily excites a lively interest. They stop feeding, gather close together, spread, circle, come together again, stretching their necks as straight as strings to look and listen.

Then the fox begins his performance. He jumps high, to snap at imaginary flies; he chases his bushy tail; he rolls over and over in clouds of flying sand; he gallops up the shore, and back like a whirlwind; he plays



peekaboo with every bush. The foolish birds grow excited; they swim in smaller circles, quacking nervously, drawing nearer and nearer to get a better look at the strange performance. They are long in coming; but curiosity always gets the better of them; those in the rear crowd the front rank forward. All the while the show goes on, the performer paying not the slightest attention, apparently, to his excited audience; only he draws slowly back from the water's edge, as if to give them room while they crowd nearer.

They are on shore at last; then, while they are lost in the most astonishing caper of all, the fox dashes among them, throwing them into the wildest confusion. His first snap never fails to throw a duck upon the sand with a broken neck; and he has generally time for a second, often for a third, before the flock escapes into deep water. Then he buries all his birds but one, throws that across his shoulders, and trots off, wagging his head, to some quiet spot, where he can eat his dinner and take a good nap undisturbed.

When, with all his cunning, Reynard is caught napping, he makes use of another good trick he knows. One winter morning my friend, the old fox-hunter, rose at daylight for a run with the dogs over the new-fallen snow. Before calling his hounds, he went to feed the chickens. As he reached the roost, his steps making no sound in the snow, he noticed the trail of a fox crossing the yard and entering the coop through a low opening. No trail came out; it flashed upon him that the fox must be inside at that moment.

Hardly had he reached this conclusion when a wild cackle arose that left no doubt about it. On the instant he whirled a box against the opening, at the same time pounding lustily to frighten the thief from killing more chickens. Reynard was trapped sure enough. The fox-hunter listened at the door; but, save for an occasional *cut-aa-cut*, not a sound was heard within.

Very cautiously he opened the door and squeezed through. There lay a fine pullet, stone dead; just beyond lay the fox, dead too.





"Well, of all things," said the fox-hunter, open-mouthed, "if he has n't gone and climbed the roost after that pullet, and then tumbled down and brokén his own neck!"

Highly elated with this unusual beginning of his hunt, he picked up the fox and the pullet and laid them down together on the box outside, while he fed his chickens.

When he came out, a minute later, there was the box and a feather or two, but no fox and no pullet. Deep tracks led out of the yard and up over the hill in flying jumps. Reynard had played possum.

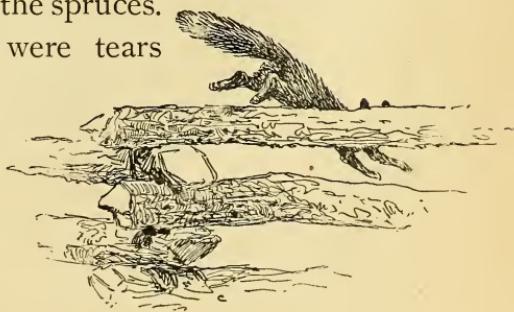
There was no need to look farther for a good fox track. Soon the music of the hounds went ringing over the hill and down the hollow; but though the dogs ran true, and the hunter watched the runways all day with something more than his usual interest, he got no glimpse of the wily old fox. Late at night the dogs came limping home, weary and footsore, but with never a long yellow hair clinging to their chops to tell a story.

Several times since then I have known of his playing possum in the same way. The

little fellow whom I mentioned as living near the wilderness, and snaring foxes, once caught a black fox — a rare, beautiful animal, with a very valuable skin — in a trap which he had baited for weeks in a wild pasture. It was the first black fox he had ever seen; and, boy-like, he thought it only a matter of mild wonder to find the beautiful creature frozen stiff, apparently, with one hind leg fast in the trap.

He carried the prize home, trap and all, over his shoulder. At his whoop of exultation the whole family came out to admire and congratulate. At last he took the trap from the fox's leg, and stretched him out on the doorstep to gloat over the treasure and stroke the glossy fur to his heart's content. His attention was taken away for a moment; then he had a dazed vision of a flying black animal that seemed to perch an instant on the log fence and vanish among the spruces.

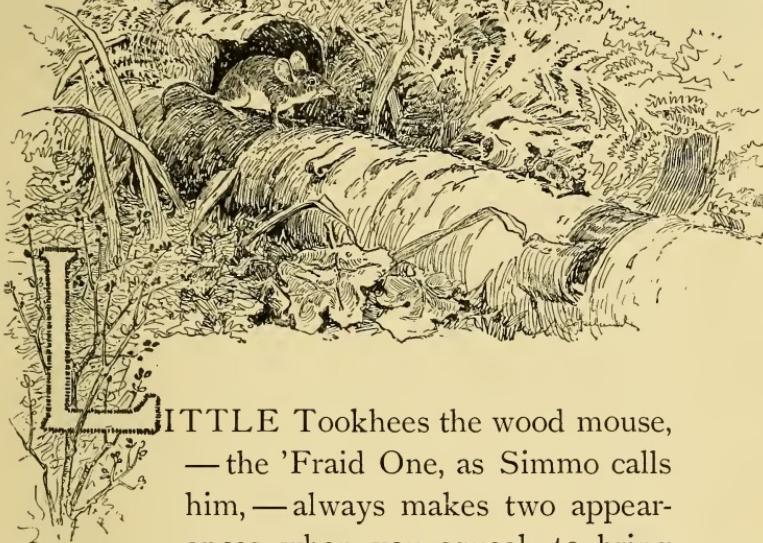
Poor Johnnie! There were tears in his eyes when he told me about it, three years afterwards.





**TOOKHEES
THE 'FRAID ONE**

TOOKHEES THE 'FRAID' ONE



LITTLE Tookhees the wood mouse,—the 'Fraid One, as Simmo calls him,—always makes two appearances when you squeak to bring him out. First, after much peeking, he runs out of his tunnel; sits up once on his hind legs; rubs his eyes with his paws; looks up for the owl, and behind him for the fox, and straight ahead at the tent where the man lives; then he dives back headlong into his tunnel with a rustle of leaves and a frightened whistle, as if Kupkawis the little

owl had seen him. That is to reassure himself. In a moment he comes back softly to see what kind of crumbs you have given him.



*Tookhees
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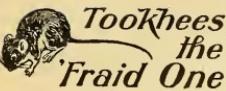
No wonder Tookhees is so timid, for there is no place in earth or air or water, outside his own little doorway under the mossy stone, where he is safe. Above him the owls watch by night and the hawks by day; around him not a prowler of the wilderness, from Mooween the bear down through a score of gradations, to Kagax the weasel, but will sniff under every old log in the hope of finding a wood mouse; and if he takes a swim, as he is fond of doing, not a big trout in the river but leaves his eddy to rush at the tiny ripple holding bravely across the current. So, with all these enemies waiting to catch him the moment he ventures out, Tookhees must needs make one or two false starts in order to find out where the coast is clear.

That is why he always dodges back after his first appearance; why he gives you two or three swift glimpses of himself, now here,

now there, before coming out into the light. He knows his enemies are so hungry, so afraid he will get away or that somebody else will catch him, that they jump for him the moment he shows a whisker. So eager are they for his flesh, and so sure, after missing him, that the swoop of wings or the snap of red jaws has scared him into permanent hiding, that they pass on to other trails. And when a prowler, watching from behind a stump, sees Tookhees flash out of sight and hears his startled squeak, he thinks naturally that the keen little eyes have seen the tail, which he forgot to curl close enough, and so sneaks away as if ashamed of himself. Not even the fox, whose patience is without end, has learned the wisdom of waiting for Tookhees' second appearance. And that is the salvation of the little 'Fraid One.

From all these enemies Tookhees has one refuge, the little arched nest beyond the pretty doorway, under the mossy stone. Most of his enemies can dig, to be sure, but his tunnel winds about in such a way that they never can tell from the looks of his





doorway where it leads to; and there are no snakes in the wilderness to follow and find out. Occasionally I have seen where Mooween has turned the stone over and clawed the earth beneath; but there is generally a tough root in the way, and Mooween concludes that he is taking too much trouble for so small a mouthful, and shuffles off to the log where the red ants live.

On his journeys through the woods Tookhees never forgets the dangerous possibilities. His progress is a series of jerks, and whisks, and jumps, and hidings. He leaves his doorway, after much watching, and shoots like a minnow across the moss to an upturned root. There he sits up and listens, rubbing his whiskers nervously. Then he glides along the root for a couple of feet, drops to the ground and disappears. He is hiding there under a dead leaf. A moment of stillness and he jumps like Jack-in-a-box. Now he is sitting on the leaf that covered him, rubbing his whiskers again, looking back over his trail as if he heard footsteps behind him. Then another nervous dash, a

squeak which proclaims at once his escape and his arrival, and he vanishes under the old moss-grown log where his fellows live, a whole colony of them.

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*Tookhees
the
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All these things, and many more, I discovered the first season that I began to study the wild things that lived within sight of my tent. I had been making long excursions after bear and beaver, following on wild-goose chases after old Whitehead the eagle and Kakagos the wild woods raven, only to find that within the warm circle of my camp-fire little wild folk were hiding, whose lives were more unknown and quite as interesting as the greater creatures I had been following.

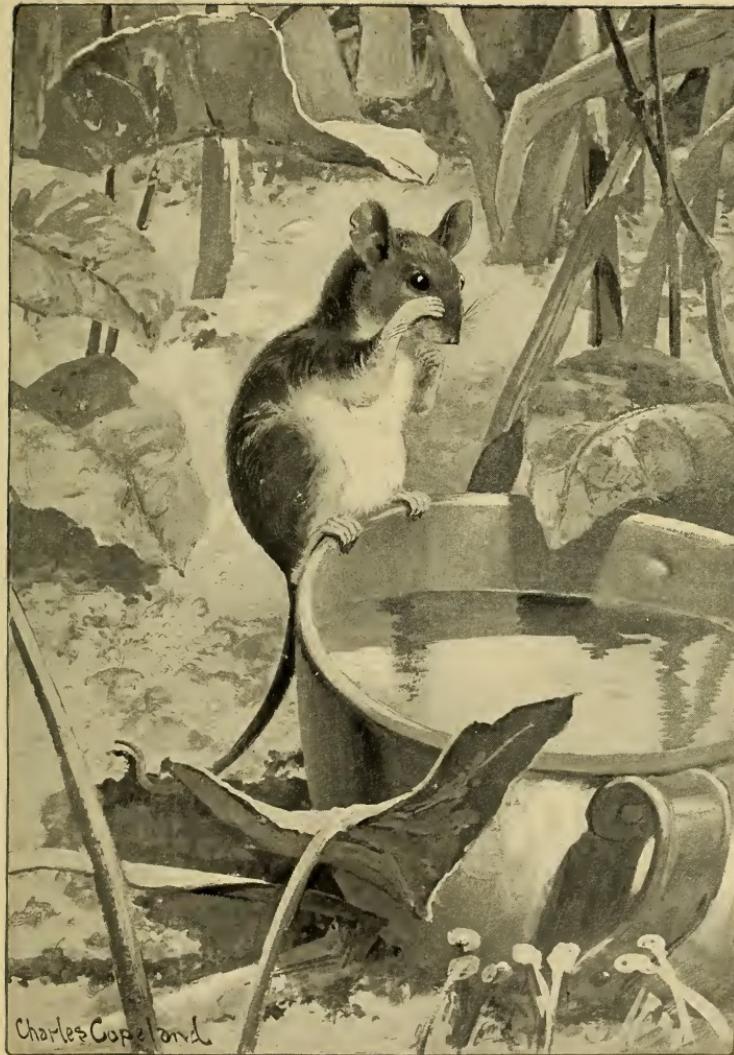
One day, as I returned quietly to camp, I saw Simmo quite lost in watching something near my tent. He stood beside a great birch tree, one hand resting against the bark that he would claim next winter for his new canoe; the other hand still grasped his axe, which he had picked up a moment before, to quicken the *tempo* of the bean kettle's song. His dark face peered behind the tree with

a kind of childlike intensity written all over it.



I stole nearer without his hearing me; but I could see nothing. The woods were all still. Killooleet was dozing by his nest; the chickadees had vanished, knowing that it was not meal time; and Meeko the red squirrel had been made to jump from the fir top to the ground so often that now he kept sullenly to his own hemlock, nursing his sore feet and scolding like a fury whenever I approached. Still Simmo watched, as if a bear were approaching his bait, till I whispered, "*Quiee, Simmo, what is it?*"

"*Nodwar k'chee Toquis*, I see little 'Fraid One," he said, unconsciously dropping into his own dialect, which is the softest speech in the world, so soft that wild things are not disturbed when they hear it, thinking it only a louder sough of the pines or a softer tunking of ripples on the rocks.—"O bah cosh, see! He wash-um face in yo lil cup." And when I tiptoed to his side, there was Tookhees sitting on the rim of my drinking cup, in which I had left a new leader to soak for



There was Tookhees sitting on the rim of my drinking cup

Tookhees
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the evening's fishing, scrubbing his face diligently. He would scoop up a double handful of water, rub it rapidly up over nose and eyes and then behind his ears,—on the spots that wake you up quickest when you are sleepy. Then another scoop of water, and another vigorous rub, ending behind his ears as before.

Simmo was full of wonder; for an Indian notices few things in the woods beside those that pertain to his trapping and hunting; and to see a mouse wash his face was as incomprehensible to him as to see me read a book. But all wood mice are very cleanly; they have none of the strong odors of our house mice. Afterwards, while getting acquainted, I saw him wash many times in the plate of water that I kept filled near his den; but he never washed more than his face and the sensitive spot behind his ears. Sometimes, however, when I have seen him swimming in the lake or river, I have wondered whether he were going on a journey, or just bathing for the love of it, as he washed his face in my cup.

I left the cup where it was and spread a



feast for the little guest, cracker crumbs and a bit of candle end. In the morning they were gone; the signs of several mice telling plainly who had been called in from the wilderness byways. That was the introduction of man to beast. Soon they came regularly. I had only to scatter crumbs and squeak like a mouse, when little streaks and flashes would appear on the moss or among the faded gold tapestries of old birch leaves, and the little wild things would come to my table, their eyes shining like jet, their tiny paws lifted to rub their whiskers or to shield themselves from the fear under which they lived continually.

They were not all alike; quite the contrary. One, the same that had washed in my cup, was gray and old, and wise from much dodging of enemies. His left ear was split, from a fight, or an owl's claw that just missed him as he dodged under a root. He was at once the shyest and boldest of the lot. For a day or two he came with marvelous stealth, making use of every dead leaf and root tangle to hide his approach, and

Tookhees
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shooting across the open spaces so quickly that one knew not what had happened—just a dun streak which ended in nothing. And the brown leaf gave no sign of what it sheltered. But once assured of his ground, he came boldly. This great man-creature, with his face close to the mouse table, perfectly still but for his eyes, with a hand that moved gently if it moved at all, was not to be feared—that Tookhees felt instinctively. And this strange fire with hungry odors, and the white tent, and the comings and goings of men, who were masters of the woods, kept fox and lynx and owl far away—that he learned after a day or two. Only the mink, who crept in at night to steal the man's fish, was to be feared. So Tookhees presently gave up his nocturnal habits and came out boldly into the sunlight. Ordinarily the little creatures come out in the dusk, when their quick movements are hidden among the shadows that creep and quiver. But with fear gone, they are only too glad to run about in the daylight, especially when good things to eat are calling them.





Besides the veteran, there was a little mother mouse, whose tiny gray jacket was still big enough to cover a wonderful mother-love, as I afterwards found out. She never ate at my table, but carried her fare away into hiding, not to feed her little ones — they were too small as yet — but thinking in some dumb way, behind the bright little eyes, that they needed her, and that her life must be spared with greater precaution for their sakes. She would steal timidly to my table, always appearing from under a gray shred of bark on a fallen birch, following the same path, first to a mossy stone, then to a dark hole under a root, then to a low brake, and along the underside of a billet of wood to the mouse table. There she would stuff both cheeks hurriedly, until they bulged as if she had toothache, and steal away by the same path, disappearing at last under the shred of gray bark.

For a long time it puzzled me to find her nest, which I knew could not be far away. It was not in the birch log where she disappeared — that was hollow the whole

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the
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length — nor was it anywhere beneath it. Some distance away was a large stone, half covered by the green moss which reached up from every side. The most careful search here had failed to discover any trace of Tookhees' doorway; so one day, when the wind blew half a gale and I was going out on the lake alone, I picked up this stone to put in the bow of my canoe. Then the secret was out, and there it was in a little dome of dried grass among some spruce roots, under the stone.

The mother was away foraging, but a faint sibilant squeaking told me that the little ones were at home and hungry, as usual. As I watched there was a swift movement in a tunnel among the roots, and Mother Mouse came rushing back. She paused a moment, lifting her forepaws against a root to sniff what danger threatened. Then she saw my face bending over the opening — *Et tu Brute!* and she darted into the nest. In a moment she was out again and disappeared into her tunnel, running swiftly, with her little ones hanging to her sides — all but

one, a delicate pink creature that one could hide in a thimble. He had lost his grip and was left behind; but he soon found the darkest corner of my hand and snuggled down there confidently.

It was ten minutes before the little mother came back, looking anxiously for the lost baby. When she found him safe in his own nest, with the man's face still watching, she was half reassured; but when she threw herself down and the little one began to drink, she grew fearful again and ran away into the tunnel, the little one clinging to her side, this time securely.

I put the stone back and gathered the moss carefully about it. In a few days Mother Mouse was again at my table. I stole away to the stone, put my ear close to it, and heard with immense satisfaction tiny squeaks, which told me that the house was again occupied. Then I watched to find the path by which Mother Mouse came to her own. When her cheeks were full, she disappeared under the shred of bark by her usual route. That led into the hollow

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center of the birch log, which she followed to the end, where she paused a moment, eyes, ears, and nostrils busy; then she jumped to a tangle of roots and dead leaves, beneath which was a tunnel that led, deep down under the moss, straight to her nest beneath the stone.

Besides these older mice, there were five or six smaller ones, all shy save one, who from the first showed not the slightest fear but came straight to my hand, ate his crumbs, and went up my sleeve, where he proceeded to make himself a warm nest by nibbling wool from my flannel shirt.

In strong contrast to this little fellow was another, who knew too well what fear meant. He belonged to another tribe, that had not yet grown accustomed to man's ways. I learned too late how careful one must be in handling the little creatures that live continually in the land where fear reigns.

A little way behind my tent was a fallen log, mouldy and moss-grown, with twin-flowers shaking their bells along its length,





under which lived a whole colony of wood mice. They ate the crumbs that I placed by the log; but they could never be tolled to my table, whether because they had no split-eared old veteran to spy out the man's ways, or because my own colony drove them away, I could never find out. One day I saw Tookhees dive under the big log as I approached, and having nothing more important to do, I placed one big crumb near his entrance, stretched out in the moss, hid my hand in a dead brake near the tempting morsel, and squeaked the call. In a moment Tookhees' nose and eyes appeared in his doorway, his whiskers twitching nervously as he smelled the candle grease. But he was suspicious of the big object, or perhaps he smelled the man and was afraid, for after much dodging in and out he disappeared altogether.

I was wondering how long his hunger would battle with his caution, when I saw the moss near my bait stir from beneath. A little waving of the moss blossoms, and Tookhees' nose and eyes appeared out of the



ground for an instant, sniffing in all directions. His little scheme was evident enough now; he was tunneling for the morsel that he dared not take openly. I watched with breathless interest as a faint quiver, nearer my bait, showed where he was pushing his works. Then the moss stirred cautiously close beside his objective; a hole opened; the morsel tumbled in, and Tookhees was gone with his prize.

I placed more crumbs from my pocket in the same place, and presently three or four mice were nibbling them. One sat up close by the dead brake, holding a bit of bread in his fore paws, like a squirrel. The brake stirred suddenly; before he could jump my hand closed over him. Slipping the other hand beneath him, I held him up to my face to watch him between my fingers. He made no movement to escape, but trembled violently. His legs seemed too weak to support his weight; he lay down; his eyes closed. One convulsive twitch and he was dead — dead of fright in a hand which had not harmed him.

It was at this colony, whose members were all strangers to me, that I learned in a peculiar way of the visiting habits of wood mice, and at the same time another lesson that I shall not soon forget. For several days I had been trying every legitimate way in vain to catch a big trout, a monster of his kind, that lived in an eddy behind a rock, up at the inlet. Trout were scarce in that lake; and in summer the big fish are always lazy and hard to catch. I was trout hungry most of the time, for the fish that I caught were small, and few and far between. Several times, however, when casting from the shore at the inlet for small fish, I had seen swirls in a great eddy near the farther shore, which told me plainly of big fish beneath; and one day, when a huge trout rolled half his length out of water behind my fly, small fry lost all their interest and I promised myself the joy of feeling my rod bend and tingle beneath the rush of that big trout if it took all summer.

Flies were of no use. I offered him a bookful, every variety of shape and color, at dawn

and dusk, without tempting him. I tried grubs, which bass like, and a frog's leg, which no pickerel can resist, and little frogs, such as big trout hunt among the lily pads in the twilight,— all without pleasing him. And then water-beetles, and a red squirrel's tail-tip, which makes the best hackle in the world, and kicking grasshoppers, and a silver spoon with a wicked "gang" of hooks, which I detest and which, I am thankful to remember, the trout detested also. They lay there in their big cool eddy, lazily taking what food the stream brought down to them, giving no heed to frauds of any kind.

Then I caught a red-fin in the stream above, hooked it securely, laid it on a big chip, coiled my line upon it, and set it floating down stream, the line uncoiling gently behind it as it went. When it reached the eddy I raised my rod tip; the line straightened; the red-fin plunged overboard, and a two-pound trout, thinking, no doubt, that the little fellow had been hiding under the chip, rose for him and took him in. That was the only one I caught. His struggle

disturbed the pool, and the other trout gave no heed to more red-fins.



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Then, one morning at daybreak, as I sat on a big rock pondering new baits and devices, a stir on an alder bush across the stream caught my eye. Tookhees the wood mouse was there, running over the bush, evidently for the black catkins which still clung to the tips. As I watched him he fell, or jumped from his branch into the quiet water below and, after circling about for a moment, headed bravely across the current. I could just see his nose as he swam, a rippling wedge against the black water, with a widening letter V trailing out behind him. The current swept him downward; he touched the edge of the big eddy; there was a swirl, a mighty plunge beneath, and Tookhees was gone, leaving no trace but a swift circle of ripples that were swallowed up in the rings and dimples behind the rock.—I had found what bait the big trout wanted.

Hurrying back to camp, I loaded a cartridge lightly with a pinch of dust shot,

spread some crumbs near the big log behind my tent, squeaked the call a few times, and sat down to wait. "These mice are strangers to me," I told Conscience, who was protesting a little, "and the woods are full of them, and I want that trout."

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In a moment there was a rustle in the mossy doorway and Tookhees appeared. He darted across the open, seized a crumb in his mouth, sat up on his hind legs, took the crumb in his paws, and began to eat. I had raised the gun, thinking he would dodge back a few times before giving me a shot; his boldness surprised me, but I did not recognize him. Still my eye followed along the barrels and over the sight to where Tookhees sat eating his crumb. My finger was pressing the trigger—"O you big butcher," said Conscience, "think how little he is, and what a big roar your gun will make! Are n't you ashamed?"



"But I want the trout," I protested.

"Catch him then, without killing this little harmless thing," said Conscience sternly.

"But he is a stranger to me; I never"—



"He is eating your bread and salt," said Conscience. That settled it; but even as I looked at him over the gun sight, Tookhees finished his crumb, came to my foot, ran along my leg into my lap, and looked into my face expectantly. The grizzled coat and the split ear showed the welcome guest at my table for a week past. He was visiting the stranger colony, as wood mice are fond of doing, and persuading them by his example that they might trust me, as he did. More ashamed than if I had been caught potting quail, I threw away the hateful shell that had almost slain my friend, and went back to camp.

There I made a mouse of a bit of muskrat fur, with a piece of my leather shoestring sewed on for a tail. It served the purpose perfectly, for within the hour I was admiring the size and beauty of the big trout as he stretched his length on the rock beside me. But I lost the fraud at the next cast, leaving it, with a foot of my leader, in the mouth of a second trout that rolled up at it the instant it touched his eddy behind the rock.

After that the wood mice were safe, so far as I was concerned. Not a trout, though he were big as a salmon, would ever taste them, unless they chose to go swimming of their own accord; and I kept their table better supplied than before. I saw much of their visiting back and forth, and have understood better what those tunnels mean that one finds in the spring when the last snows are melting. In a corner of the woods, where the drifts lay, you will often find a score of tunnels coming in from all directions to a central chamber. They speak of Tookhees' sociable nature, of his long visits with his fellows, undisturbed by swoop or snap, when the packed snow above has swept the summer fear away and made him safe from hawk and owl and fox and wildcat, and when no open water tempts him to go swimming, where Skooktum the big trout lies waiting mouse hungry, under his eddy.

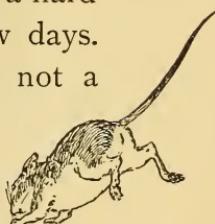
The weeks passed all too quickly, as wilderness weeks do, and the sad task of breaking camp lay just before us. But one

thing troubled me — the little Tookhees, who knew no fear, but tried to make a nest in the sleeve of my flannel shirt. His simple confidence touched me more than the curious ways of all the other mice. Every day he came and took his crumbs, not from the common table, but from my hand, evidently enjoying its warmth while he ate, and always getting the choicest morsels. But I knew that he would be the first one caught by the owl after I left; for it is fear only that saves the wild things.

Occasionally one finds animals of various kinds in which the instinct of fear is lacking — a frog, a young partridge, a moose calf — and wonders what golden age that knew no fear, or what glorious vision of Isaiah, in which lion and lamb lie down together, is here set forth. I have even seen a young black duck, whose natural disposition is wild as the wilderness itself, that had profited nothing by his mother's alarms and her constant lessons in hiding, but came bobbing up to my canoe among the sedges of a wilderness lake, while his brethren crouched

invisible in their coverts of bending rushes, and his mother flapped wildly off, splashing and quacking and trailing a wing, to draw me away from the little ones.

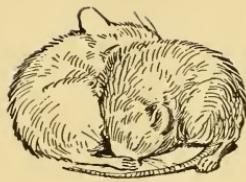
The little one that knows no fear is generally abandoned by his mother, or else is the first to fall in the battle with the strong before she gives him up as hopeless. Little Tookhees evidently belonged to this class; so, before leaving, I undertook the task of teaching him fear, which had evidently been too much for Nature and his own mother. I pinched him a few times, hooting like an owl as I did so,—a startling process, which sent the other mice diving like brown streaks to cover. Then I waved a branch over him, like a hawk's wing, at the same time flipping him end over end, shaking him up terribly. Then again, when he appeared with a new light dawning in his eyes, the light of fear, I would set a stick to wiggling, like a creeping fox, among the ferns, and switch him sharply with a hemlock tip. It was a hard lesson, but he learned it after a few days. And before I finished the teaching not a

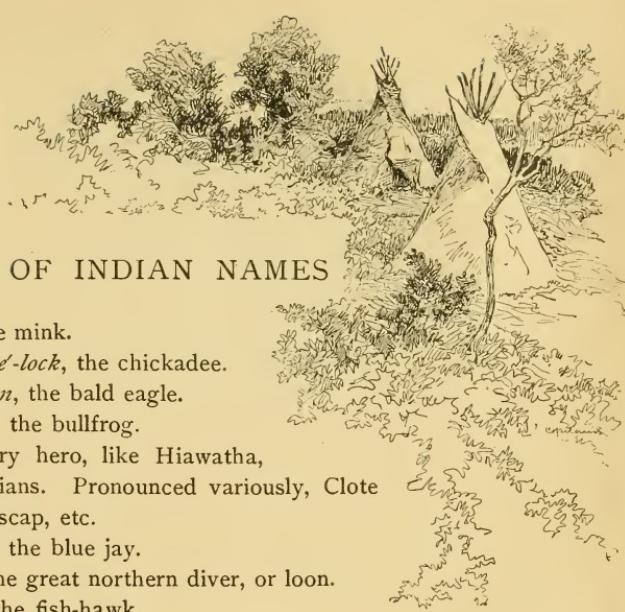




mouse would come to my table, no matter how persuasively I squeaked. They would dart about in the twilight, as of yore, but the first whish of my stick sent them all back to cover on the instant.

That was their stern yet practical preparation for the robber horde that would soon be prowling over my camping ground. Then a stealthy movement among the ferns, or the sweep of a shadow among the twilight shadows would mean a very different thing from wriggling stick and waving hemlock tip. Snap and swoop, and teeth and claws, — jump for your life and find out afterwards. That is the rule for a wise wood mouse. So I said good-by, and left them to take care of themselves in the wilderness.





GLOSSARY OF INDIAN NAMES

Cheokhes, *chē-ōk-hē's*, the mink.

Ch'geegee-lokh, *ch'gee-gee'-lock*, the chickadee.

Cheplahgan, *chēp-lāh'-gan*, the bald eagle.

Chigwooltz, *chig-wooltz'*, the bullfrog.

Clôte Scarpe, a legendary hero, like Hiawatha,
of the Northern Indians. Pronounced variously, Clote
Scarpe, Groscap, Gluscap, etc.

Deedeeaskh, *dee-dee'-ask*, the blue jay.

Hukweem, *huk-weem'*, the great northern diver, or loon.

Ismaques, *iss-mā-ques'*, the fish-hawk.

Kagax, *kāg'-āx*, the weasel.

Kakagos, *kā-kā-gōs'*, the raven.

Keeokuskh, *kee-o-kusk'*, the muskrat.

Keeonekh, *kee'-o-nek*, the otter.

Killooleet, *kil'-loo-leet'*, the white-throated sparrow.

Kookooskoos, *koo-koo-skoos'*, the great horned owl.

Koskomenos, *kōs'-kōm-e-nōs'*, the kingfisher.

Kupkawis, *cup-kā'-wis*, the barred owl.

Kwaseekho, *kwā-seek'-ho*, the sheldrake.

Lhoks, *locks*, the panther.

Malsun, *māl'-sun*, the wolf.

Meeko, *meek'-ō*, the red squirrel.

Megaleep, *meg'-ā-leep*, the caribou.

- Milicete, *mil'-i-cete*, the name of an Indian tribe; written also Malicete.
- Mitches, *mit-chĕs*, the birch partridge, or ruffed grouse.
- Moktaques, *mok-tă'-ques*, the hare.
- Mooween, *moo-ween'*, the black bear.
- Musquash, *mus'-quăsh*, the muskrat.
- Nemox, *nĕm'-ox*, the fisher.
- Pekquam, *pek-wām'*, the fisher.
- Seksagadagee, *sek'-să-gă-dă'-gee*, the Canada grouse, or spruce partridge.
- Skooktum, *skook'-tum*, the trout.
- Tookhees, *tōk'-hees*, the wood mouse.
- Upweekis, *up-week'-iss*, the Canada lynx.

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